

# COLOSSIANS

## INTRODUCTION

The author of this epistle is the apostle Paul as stated in [Colossians 1:1](#).

The Epistle to the Colossians is one of the Prison Epistles which are so called because they were written by Paul while he was in prison in Rome. The Prison Epistles include Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and the very personal Epistle to Philemon.

The year was about B.C. 62. Four messengers left Rome unobserved, but they each carried a very valuable document. Tychicus was carrying the Epistle to the Ephesians over to Ephesus where he was the pastor or the leader of that church. Epaphroditus was carrying the Epistle to the Philippians as he was the pastor in Philippi. Epaphras was carrying the Epistle to the Colossians; apparently he was the leader of the church in Colosse. Onesimus was carrying the Epistle to Philemon. Philemon was his master, and Onesimus, who had run away, was returning to him.

These four are companion epistles and together have been called the anatomy of Christianity, or the anatomy of the church. We can see that the subjects of these epistles cover all aspects of the Christian faith:

Ephesians is about the body of believers called the church, of which Christ is the head.

Colossians directs our attention to the head of the body who is Christ. The body itself is secondary. Christ is the theme. He is the center of the circle around which all Christian living revolves. Colossians emphasizes the pleroma; Christ is the fullness of God.

Philippians shows the church walking here on earth. Christian living is the theme; it is the periphery of the circle of which Christ is the center. Philippians emphasizes the kenosis, Christ becoming a servant.

Philemon gives us Christianity in action. We would say it is where the rubber meets the road, or in that day it was where the sandals touched the Roman road. It demonstrates Christianity worked out in a pagan society.

We can see why these four documents have been called the anatomy of the church -- they belong together to make a whole.

I don't think any armored car ever carried four more valuable documents. Do you realize that if today you possessed those four original documents as they came from the hand of Paul, you could probably get any price you wanted for them -- you would have the wealth of a king! Well, we measure it in terms other than the dollar sign; their spiritual value cannot be estimated in human terms at all.

I have never been to Colosse although I have been in sight of it -- I have seen it from a distance. The ruins of it stand there in the gates of Phrygia. It is over in the same area where Laodicea and Hierapolis are. There are some ruins of the city; there are no ruins of any church. The church at Colosse met in the home of Philemon. I doubt that there ever was a church building there.

A great civilization and a great population were in that area. It was more or less a door to the Orient, to the East; it was called the gates of Phrygia. Here the East and the West met. Here is where the Roman Empire attempted to tame the East and to bring it under Roman subjugation.

Colosse was a great fortress city as were Laodicea, Philadelphia, Sardis, Thyatira, and Pergamum. All of these had been great cities of defense against invasion from the East. But by the time of Paul the apostle the danger had been relieved because the Roman Empire was pretty much in charge of the world by then. As a result, the people had lapsed into paganism and gross immorality at the time of Paul. And Colosse was typical of the great cities of that day.

As far as the record is concerned, Paul never visited the city of Colosse. After I visited the Bible lands I could understand many things in Scripture that I had not understood before. Why didn't Paul visit Colosse? It seems that he did not come in through the gates of Phrygia, but instead he came into the north of Colosse over at Sardis. Apparently he took that Roman road to Ephesus and by-passed Colosse.

Even though Paul was never in the city of Colosse, he was the founder of the church there. Epaphras was the leader of the church, and he may have been the direct founder, but Paul founded the church at Colosse. He was the founder in very much the same way as he was the founder of the church at Rome: he touched multitudes of people in the Roman Empire who later gravitated to Rome and formed the church there. Paul may have visited Laodicea (although I doubt that very seriously), and believers may have come from there to Colosse. But converts from Paul's ministry in Ephesus very definitely could have come to Colosse to form the nucleus of that church. Colosse is located just seventy-five to one hundred miles east of Ephesus.

Paul spent three years of ministry in Ephesus, two of them teaching in the school of Tyrannus. There was a tremendous civilization in that area -- the culture of the Roman Empire was centered there. It was no longer centered in Greece, which had pretty much deteriorated along with her philosophy and culture. But the Greek culture was virile in Asia Minor, the area known as Turkey today. It was in this area that Paul did his greatest work along with his co-workers. There were with him John Mark, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and apparently some of the other apostles. We know that the apostle John became the pastor at Ephesus later on.

Asia Minor was a great cultural center, but it was also a center for heathenism, paganism, and the mystery religions. There was already abroad that which is known as Gnosticism, the first heresy of the church. There were many forms of Gnosticism, and in Colosse there were the Essenes. There are three points of identification for this group:

1. They had an exclusive spirit. They were the aristocrats in wisdom. They felt that they were the people -- they had knowledge in a jug and held the stopper in their hands. They felt they had the monopoly of it all. As a result, they considered themselves super-duper in knowledge and thought they knew more than any of the apostles. Paul will issue them a warning in the first chapter: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" ([Col. 1:28](#)).

Perfection is not to be found in any cult or any heresy, but in Christ Jesus. All wisdom is found in Him.

2. They held speculative tenets on creation. They taught that God did not create the universe directly, but created a creature who in turn created another creature, until one finally created the physical universe. Christ was considered a creature in this long series of creations. This was known in pantheistic Greek philosophy as the demiurge. Paul refutes this in [Colossians 1:15-19](#) and [Colossians 2:18](#).

3. Another identifying mark of this group was their ethical practice of asceticism and unrestrained licentiousness. They got the asceticism from the influence of Greek Stoicism and the unrestrained licentiousness from the influence of Greek Epicureanism. Paul refutes this in [Colossians 2:16, 23](#) and [Colossians 3:5-9](#).

Colossians is the chart and compass which enables the believer to sail between the ever present Scylla and Charybdis. On the one hand there is always the danger of Christianity freezing into a form, into a ritual. It has done that in many areas and in many churches so that Christianity involves nothing more than going through a routine. On the other hand is the danger that Christianity will evaporate into a philosophy. I had an example of that when a man who was liberal in his theology asked me, "What theory of inspiration do you hold?" I answered him, "I don't hold a theory of inspiration. I believe that the Word of God is the revelation of God as it says it is. That is not a theory." We find people talking about theories of inspiration and theories of atonement -- that is the evaporation of Christianity into a philosophy.

So there are two dangers. One is to freeze into form and become nothing but a ritualistic church; the other is to evaporate into steam and be lost in liberalism and false philosophy. You will remember that the Lord Jesus said that He was the Water of Life. He didn't say, "I am the ice of life"; neither did he say, "I am the steam of life." He is the Water of Life - - water at the temperature of life, neither freezing nor boiling.

The Water of Life is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" ([Col. 1:27](#)). Christ is to live in you. He is to walk down the street where you live. Christianity is Christ down where we live, Christ in the nitty-gritty of life, down where the rubber meets the road.

There has always been the danger of adding something to or subtracting something from Christ -- the oldest heresy is also the newest heresy, by the way. Christianity is not a mathematical problem of adding or subtracting: Christianity is Christ. This is what Paul teaches in this epistle: "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" ([Col. 2:9](#)) -- in Him dwelleth all the pleroma. All you need is to be found in Christ Jesus.

Here is a quotation from William Sanday: "In the Ephesian Epistle the church is the primary object, and the thought passes upward to Christ as the head of the church. In the Colossian Epistle Christ is the primary object, and the thought passes downward to the church as the body of Christ."

The dominating thought in this epistle is: Christ is all. He is all I need; He is everything. Charles Wesley put it like this in his lovely hymn: "Thou, O Christ, art all I want; more than all in Thee I find."

Charles Spurgeon said, "Look on thine own nothingness; be humble, but look at Jesus, thy great representative, and be glad. It will save thee many pangs if thou will learn to think of thyself as being in Him" -- accepted in the Beloved, finding Him our all in all.

I received a letter from a dear lady here in Pasadena. She is eighty years old and doesn't expect to live much longer, but she is resting in Christ's loving forgiveness. My friend, you cannot find a better place to rest.

If you are resting in Him, you will find that you don't need to go through a ritual. You won't need to do a lot of gyrations and genuflections. You won't be discussing the theories of inspiration. You either believe that the Bible is the Word of God, or you don't believe it is the Word of God.

Let us stop this so-called intellectual approach that we find in our churches today. It's no good. When I started out as a pastor, I tried to be intellectual. An elder in the church in which I served came to me and talked to me about it, and he said, "We would rather have a genuine Vernon McGee than an imitation of anybody else." You see, I was trying to imitate intellectual men whom I admired. We don't need to do that kind of thing -- we need to be ourselves. We need to get down off our high horses. Remember that the Lord Jesus is feeding sheep, not giraffes.

The practical section of this epistle shows us Christ, the fullness of God, poured out in the lives of the believers. The alabaster box of ointment needs to be broken today. The world not only needs to see something, but it needs to smell something. The pollution of this world is giving a very bad odor in these days. We need something of the fragrance and loveliness of Jesus Christ, and only the church is permitted to break that alabaster box of ointment and let out the fragrance.

## **Outline**

### **I. Doctrinal: Christ, the Fullness (pleroma) of God; in Christ We Are Made Full, [Col 1](#) through [Col 2](#)**

- A. Introduction, [Col 1:1-8](#)
- B. Paul's Prayer, [Col 1:9-14](#)
- C. Person of Christ, [Col 1:15-19](#)
- D. Objective Work of Christ for Sinners, [Col 1:20-23](#)
- E. Subjective Work of Christ for Saints, [Col 1:24-29](#)
- F. Christ, the Answer to Philosophy (For the Head), [Col 2:1-15](#)
- G. Christ, the Answer to Ritual (For the Heart), [Col 2:16-23](#)

### **II. Practical: Christ, the Fullness of God, Poured out in Life through Believers, [Col 3](#) through [Col 4](#)**

- A. Thoughts and Affections of Believers Are Heavenly, [Col 3:1-4](#)
- B. Living of Believers Is Holy, [Col 3:5](#) through [Col 4](#):
- C. Fellowship of Believers Is Hearty, [Col 4:7-18](#)

## **Chapter 1**

**THEME:** Christ, the fullness of God -- in Christ we are made full; Introduction; Paul's prayer; person of Christ; objective work of Christ for sinners; subjective work of Christ for saints

## **Introduction (1:1-8)**

The four Prison Epistles of Paul, which include the Epistle to the Colossians, have been called the anatomy of the Church because their subjects cover all aspects of the Christian faith. In Colossians our attention is directed to the head of the body who is Christ. The body, the church, is secondary. Instead, Christ is the theme, and Christian living is centered in Him.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ [[Col. 1:1-2](#)].

Paul calls himself "an apostle of Jesus Christ," and he always says it is "by the will of God." Paul was in the will of God when he was an apostle. God made him an apostle.

Are you in the will of God today? Are you serving Christ? Are you sure you are in the proper place? Are you sure you are doing the proper thing? I believe that every believer is called to function in the body of believers, but it is important to be functioning in the right way. There are too many people who are active, doing something that they are not supposed to be doing. Too often we try to imitate other people. We think, "I'll get busy doing what brother so-and-so is doing." We need to remember that our gifts are different, and we are each going to function a little differently. But we ought to be functioning. God made Paul an apostle. Did God put you where you are? When you know you are in the will of God, there is a deep satisfaction in life, by the way.

"To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse." He is not talking about two groups of people. The saints and the believing brethren are the same. Faithful brethren are believing brethren, and they are saints. We are not saints because of what we do. We are saints by our position. The Greek word for saints means "to be set apart for God." Those who are set apart for God and the believing brethren are the same group of people.

Notice that they are "in Christ" but they are "at Colosse." The most important question is not, Where are you at? but Who are you in? That may not be good grammar, but it sure is good Bible. The saints are at Colosse -- it is important that we have an address down here. But we ought to have an address up yonder also: in Christ.

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." We must know the grace of God in order to experience the peace of God.

In the better manuscripts "and the Lord Jesus Christ" is not added. It says simply, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father." It is important to remember that Paul is writing to counteract Gnosticism, which was the first heresy in the church. This was the Essene branch of Gnosticism. They relegated God to a place far removed from man and

taught that one had to go through emanations to get to God. Have you ever noticed that all heathen religions and cults have some sort of an "open sesame" before you can get in to God? Paul makes it very clear here that grace and peace come directly "from God our Father." We can come directly to Him through Christ.

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
praying always for you [[Col. 1:3](#)].

We can go directly to God. We do not need to go through any form of emanation at all. Anyone who is in Christ Jesus has access to God the Father. One of the benefits of being justified by faith is access to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Praying always for you." You would find it very challenging to compile a list of the folk Paul said he was praying for, and add the Colossian believers to the list. He always prayed for them; they were on his prayer list.

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which  
ye have to all the saints,

For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard  
before in the word of the truth of the gospel [[Col. 1:4-5](#)].

Here Paul links the trinity of graces for believers: (1) faith -- past; (2) love -- present; and (3) hope -- future.

Paul is going to talk about the good points of these believers. They had faith toward God. Faith rests upon historical facts; it is based on the past. It was based on what they had heard before "in the word of truth of the gospel." This refers to the content of the gospel, the great truths that pertain to the gospel of the grace of God. God has us shut up to a cross, and He asks us to believe Him. You haven't really heard the gospel until you have heard something to believe. The gospel is not something for us to do. It tells what He did for you and for me over nineteen hundred years ago. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" ([Rom. 10:17](#)). Faith is not a leap in the dark. It rests upon historical facts; it is believing God.

"And of the love which ye have to all the saints" -- faith is based upon the past, but love is for the present.

It is nonsense today to boast of the fundamentalism of our doctrine and then to spend our time crucifying our brethren and attempting to find fault with them. There are too many "wonderful saints" looking down on their fellow believers who have not measured up to their high standard and who are not separated like they are separated. My friend, the world is not interested in that kind of approach. The world is looking to see whether Christians love each other or not. It is hypocrisy to consider oneself a Christian and then not to demonstrate love for the brethren. If we have disagreements with our brethren, we are to bear with them, we are to pray for them, and we are to love them. Remember that a Christian is a sinner saved by grace. None of us will ever be perfect in this life.

A man came to me to criticize a certain Christian leader -- and I don't agree with everything that leader does either -- but the Spirit of God is using that man in a mighty way. So I asked the man who was complaining, "Do you ever pray for him?" He

answered, "No, I don't." I replied, "I think that you ought to pray for him. You may not agree with him on every point, but the Spirit of God is using him."

These Colossian believers had their good points. They were sound in the faith toward God. They were fundamental in their belief, and they also had love for the brethren. And Paul says that they had hope for the future -- "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven."

In 1 Corinthians also Paul lists these three graces, but he lists them a little differently: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" ([1Cor. 13:13](#)). He puts hope in second position and love is listed last. Why? Because love is the only thing that is going to abide. Love is for the present, it is true, but it is also going to make it into eternity. It is very important that we begin to exhibit love down here upon this earth, don't you agree?

That "hope which is laid up for you in heaven" is the blessed hope. We are to look for the coming of Christ; we are to love His appearing.

"Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth [content] of the gospel." The gospel is a simple message which God simply asks you to believe. You are asked to believe on the basis of certain facts: Jesus Christ was virgin born. He performed miracles. He is the God-man. He died on a cross, was buried, and rose again. He ascended back into heaven. He sent the Holy Spirit into the world on the Day of Pentecost to form the church. And He is sitting at God's right hand today; His position there indicates that our redemption is complete. We are asked to enter into the rest which He offers to those who will come to Him. He has a present ministry of intercession for us. I think He has other ministries, too. And finally, He is going to return to this earth again. These are all part of the glorious gospel. This is the "content" of the gospel, as Paul expresses it here.

[Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth \[Col. 1:6\].](#)

Paul says the gospel has come to the Colossians as it has come to "all the world." Dr. Marvin R. Vincent, a great expositor of the Epistle to the Colossians, as well as other expositors, believes this is hyperbole. I'll be honest with you, I also had difficulty accepting this statement. Is Paul trying to say that at this particular time when he was in prison in Rome the gospel had reached the world? That is what he says. I have come to the position that I believe he meant what he said literally; it is not hyperbole. When I visited Asia Minor, I stood in Turkey at the city of Sardis and saw part of a Roman road that had been uncovered by excavation. That is the road that Paul traveled when he came down out of the Galatian country on the way to Ephesus. For three years he preached the gospel in Ephesus to people who were there from all over the Roman Empire. As a result, the gospel had gone ahead to Rome long before Paul was taken there as a prisoner.

The word for "world" here is *kosmos*, and it simply means the Roman Empire of that day. The gospel at that time had penetrated into the farthest reaches of the Roman Empire. It may have even crossed over to Great Britain. Every part of the Roman world had heard the gospel. I tell you, my friend, those early apostles were on the move! I am reluctant to

criticize anything they did. Paul says here that the gospel had gone into all the Roman world.

"And bringeth forth fruit." Wherever the gospel is preached it will bring forth fruit. Paul says that, and it is true.

I must confess my faith was weak when we began our radio program. I determined to give out the Word of God, but I'll be honest with you, I expected to fall on my face and see great failure. The biggest surprise of my life was that God blessed His Word. Was I surprised! I thought He would let me down, but He didn't. He said He would bless His Word, and we can count on Him to do that. It "bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth." I am overwhelmed today by the letters and by the people I meet who say they were brought to Christ through our radio ministry. It started out so weakly. It was just a Mickey Mouse operation if there ever was one. But God blesses His Word. I don't only believe that; I know it. I won't even argue with anybody about that. Some fellow comes to me and says, "Dr. McGee, I don't believe the Bible is the Word of God." And I say, "You don't?" He says, "No. Aren't you going to argue with me to persuade me?" I say, "Well, no." And he asks, "Why not?" I have to say, "Because I know it is the Word of God. I don't only believe it; I know it."

It would be just as if someone came to me and said, "Dr. McGee, I want to argue with you about whether you love your wife or not. I can give you several philosophical arguments that will show that you don't love your wife." Do you know, that fellow might out-argue me and whip me down intellectually. He might show me by logic and all types of argument that I don't love my wife. Do you know what I would say? I'd say, "Brother, I don't know about those arguments, but I want you to know one thing: I love my wife." You see, that is something I know. I know I love her. I don't need all those cogent, sophisticated, astute, esoteric arguments. There are some things we simply know.

And we should not let what we don't know upset what we do know. That is important for us to see. Paul says that the gospel will bring forth fruit. That is the wonderful confidence that we can have.

**As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ [Col. 1:7].**

Apparently Epaphras was the leader or the pastor of the church in Colosse. (Epaphras sounds like the name of a medicine to me, but nevertheless, that was the name of the fellow.) Paul calls him "our dear fellow-servant." Have you noticed how graciously Paul could talk about other servants of God? Paul had something good to say about those who were preaching the Word of God. But when he found a rascal, he was just like our Lord in that he would really reprimand evil when he saw it.

The Lord Jesus was so merciful to sinners. The woman taken in adultery should have been stoned to death, but notice how gracious our Lord was to her (see [John 8:1-11](#)). Then there was that arrogant Pharisee, Nicodemus, who came to the Lord Jesus and attempted to pay Him a compliment: ". . . Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God" ([John 3:2](#)). In effect, "We Pharisees know. And, brother, when we know something, that's it!" The Lord Jesus so gently and so graciously pulled him down off his

high horse. When the Lord got through with him, he was just plain, little old Nicky. Little old Nicodemus was trying to be somebody, but he was nothing in the world but a religious robot going through rituals. The Lord Jesus brought him down to the place where he could humbly ask, "How can these things be?" Then the Lord Jesus led him to see the Cross. How gracious He was in dealing with folk like that!

**Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit [Col. 1:8].**

We will not find a great emphasis on the Holy Spirit in this epistle, but Paul does make it clear to the Colossian believers that they would not have been able to exhibit this love unless it were by the Holy Spirit. It was to the Galatians that Paul wrote that the fruit of the Spirit is love. In this epistle he will not dwell on that aspect. He is going to dwell on the person of Christ. As he does that, the Spirit of God will take the things of Christ and will show them unto us. That is the important work of the Holy Spirit.

### **Paul's Prayer (1:9-14)**

In this next section we have Paul's prayer for the Colossians. This is one of the most wonderful prayers in Scripture. It is a prayer that I think touches all the bases, and it will be very helpful for us to notice what Paul prays for.

It is very interesting that today we find people who are praying for these things. Paul makes it clear that we already have these things. Dr. H. A. Ironside speaks of the prayers that we hear people say which go something like this: "We pray Thee, forgive us our sins and wash us in the blood of Jesus. Receive us into Thy kingdom. Give us of Thy Holy Spirit, and save us at last for Christ's sake. Amen." Did you know that God has already answered every one of those petitions? God has forgiven us all our trespasses. We are cleansed by the blood of Christ. He has already translated us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love. He has sealed us with His Holy Spirit. ". . . if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" ([Rom. 8:9](#)). He has saved us eternally from the very moment we first believed the gospel. Therefore it would be more fitting to thank and praise Him for all these things than to be petitioning Him for what we already have. Instead of praying, "We ask this of Thee," the prayer should be, "We thank Thee for all that You have already done."

Now we come to this wonderful prayer that Paul prayed. First he will make several petitions, and then he will thank the Lord for the things He has already done for us.

**For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to  
pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the  
knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding  
[Col. 1:9].**

The first thing for which Paul prayed was that they might be filled with knowledge. The Greek word is epignosis which means "a super knowledge." The Gnostics, the heretics there in Colosse, boasted that they had a super knowledge. Paul says here, "I pray that you might be filled with knowledge, that you might have a super knowledge." But Paul confines this knowledge to knowledge of the will of God -- this knowledge must be "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

Let me merely call attention to the fact that the word wisdom occurs six times in this short epistle.

**That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God [Col. 1:10].**

His second petition is that they might be pleasing to God. That means that these Christians will not be bowing down to men or attempting to please them.

His third request is that they might be "fruitful in every good work." The Christian is a fruit-bearing branch. Christ is the vine, and we should bring forth fruit.

"Increasing in the knowledge of God." A Christian should not be static but alive and growing in the Word of God. So their increase in the knowledge of God is Paul's fourth request.

**Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness [Col. 1:11].**

Here is his fifth request. Strength and power can come only from God; they are produced by the Holy Spirit. These believers are to be strengthened with all might "unto all patience and longsuffering." And this patience and longsuffering is to be "with joyfulness."

**Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light [Col. 1:12].**

Here is the beginning of the list of things for which Paul is thankful. All our prayers should be filled with thanksgiving. Paul is thankful that God by His grace has given us an inheritance with the saints in light. We ought to lay hold of that today. We should believe God and believe that His promise is true.

**Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son [Col. 1:13].**

Paul is thankful that we have been delivered from the kingdom of Satan. We were dead in trespasses and sins, going the way of the world. Now we have been translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. This is the present aspect of the kingdom of God here on earth today. You can't build the kingdom of God. The only way you can be a part of it is to open your heart and receive Christ as your Savior. That translates you into the kingdom of His dear Son.

**In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins [Col. 1:14].**

Not only have we been translated into His kingdom, but we also have forgiveness of sins in Him. This is always associated with the blood of Christ. God does not arbitrarily and sentimentally forgive sins. We have redemption through His blood -- "redemption" is apolutrosis which means "to set free an enslaved people." He paid a price to deliver us out of slavery.

Paul has given thanks for five wonderful truths. If we are trusting Christ, God has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. God has redeemed us through Christ and has forgiven us our sins through His blood. Yet there are a great many Christian people today who pray for all five of these things. My believing friend, they are yours. Why don't you thank Him for them?

### **Person Of Christ (1:15-19)**

We spoke of the person of Jesus Christ in our study of the Song of Solomon. In Colossians we come in close on the subject and learn the theology of it. This is a very lofty, very exalted, and very grand section of this epistle. The subject here is the person of Jesus Christ. We cannot say too much about Him, and we will never in this life be able to comprehend Him in all of His wonder and in all of His glory.

This section provides an answer to those who would deny the deity of Jesus Christ. To understand these verses is to realize how wonderful He really is. Paul is specifically attempting to answer one of the oldest heresies in the church, Gnosticism. Another of the first heresies was Arianism. Arius of Alexandria said that the Lord Jesus Christ was a creature, a created being. The Council of Nicaea in B.C. 325 answered this heresy saying, "The Son is very Man of very man, and very God of very God." Later on in the history of the church, Socinus propagated the heresy that Jesus was not God and that mankind did not need a Savior from sin. He taught that we were not totally depraved. Today this is the basis of Unitarianism and some of the cults, including Jehovah's Witnesses.

There are given here nine marks of identification of Christ which make Him different from and superior to any other person who has ever lived.

**Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature [[Col. 1:15](#)]**

1. He is the "image of the invisible God." "Image" is eikon. How could He be the image of the invisible God? You cannot take a photograph or an image of that which is invisible. How could He be that? John makes this clear in the prologue to his gospel: "In the beginning was the Word." That is a beginning that has no beginning -- Christ has no beginning. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." ([John 1:1](#)). And then John says, "And the Word was made [born] flesh . . ." ([John 1:14](#)). If you want the Christmas story in John's gospel, that is it: He was born flesh. This is the way that He became the image of the invisible God. How could He be that? Because He is God. If He were not God, He could not have been the image of the invisible God.

2. He is "the first born of every creature." This reveals His relationship to the Father and His position in the Trinity. God is the everlasting Father; the Son is the everlasting Son. His position in the Trinity is that of Son.

"Firstborn" indicates His priority before all creation. His headship of all creation does not mean that He was born first. We need to understand what the Scriptures mean by "Firstborn."

Nowhere does Scripture teach that Jesus Christ had His beginning at Bethlehem. We are told in the great prophecy of [Micah 5:2](#) that He would be born in Bethlehem, but that He came forth from everlasting. [Isaiah 9:6](#) tells us, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. . . ." The child is born, but the Son is given. He came out of eternity and took upon Himself our humanity.

Paul is dealing with one of the philosophies of that day, one of the mystery religions. It is called the demiurge, and it held that God created a creature just beneath Him; then that creature created a creature beneath him; then that creature created a creature beneath him. You can just keep on going down that ladder until finally you come to a creature that created this universe. These were emanations from God. Gnosticism taught that Jesus was one of these creatures, an emanation from God. Now Paul is answering that. He says that Jesus Christ is the Firstborn of all creation, He is back of all creation. The Greek word is prototokos meaning "before all creation." He was not born in creation. He is the One who came down over nineteen hundred years ago and became flesh. He existed before any creation: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" ([John 1:1-3](#)). God the Father is the everlasting Father. God the Son is the everlasting Son. There never was a time when Christ was begotten.

There are several places in Scripture where the Lord Jesus is called the Firstborn. He is called the Firstborn of all creation; He is called the Firstborn from the dead; and He is called the only begotten.

He is called the Firstborn from the dead later in this first chapter, [verse 18](#). This is what the psalmist spoke of: "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" ([Ps. 2:7](#)). Paul explained this idea further in that great sermon that he preached at Antioch of Pisidia in the Galatian country. Paul said there that the psalmist meant that Christ was begotten from the dead: "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" ([Acts 13:32-33](#)).

When Jesus Christ is called the Firstborn of all creation, it is not referring to His birth at Bethlehem. This is no Christmas verse. It means that He has top priority of position. It has nothing to do with His origin at all. The psalmist wrote, "Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth" ([Ps. 89:27](#)). This makes it very clear that Christ as the eternal Son holds the position of top priority to all creation. In other words, He is the Creator. There is no demiurge, no series of creatures being created one after another. He Himself created all things.

Let me mention some other verses of Scripture that speak of the person of Christ. In [Hebrews 1:3](#) we read: "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." That doesn't sound very much like He is a mere creature, does it? He is the Second Person of the Godhead.

"And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." Now the Lord Jesus is not one of these creatures: "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom" ([Heb. 1:7-8](#)).

So, my friend, what we are talking about here is not that the Lord Jesus was born a creature; we are talking about the fact that He is God. When He came into the world, a child was born but the Son was given, and He had come out of eternity. The angel's announcement to Mary was ". . . that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" ([Luke 1:35](#)). Why? Because that is who He is. He was the Son of God before He came into this world. ". . . Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" ([Matt. 16:16](#)).

Now we come to the next two great statements concerning the Lord Jesus:

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him [[Col. 1:16](#)]

3. "By him were all things created." If all things were created by Him, that clears up the question of His being a creature or the Creator. The statement that He is the Firstborn of all creation does not mean that He was created, but rather He is the One who did the creating.

There are two kinds of creation, the "visible and invisible." It is very interesting here to note that he mentions different gradations of rank in spiritual intelligences: thrones, dominions, principalities, powers. There are gradations in the angelic hosts. Other verses in Scripture tell us that there are seraphim and cherubim, and also the archangels. And then there are just the common, everyday, vegetable variety of angels.

In Ephesians we note the fact that our enemy is a spiritual enemy. Satan has a spiritual host that rebelled with him. So there are different gradations of rank among our spiritual enemies, too.

4. It is wonderful to know that all things were created by Him. But there is another truth given to us here: All things were created "for him."

If you were to go out tonight and look up at the heavens, you would see a number of stars. Have you ever wondered why each star is in its own special position? Why is that star in that part of the heavens? It is in that part of the heavens because that is where Jesus wanted it. Not only did He create all things, but they were created for Him.

One of the most wonderful truths in this connection is that we are told that we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a big hunk of real estate coming to us someday. Maybe He will turn over a whole star to us. I don't know; I have often wondered. I think we will be very busy in eternity. We will not be earthlings then, but we will be given a new body which is free from gravitation. We will be living in a city called the New Jerusalem. We will be able to travel through God's vast universe. I don't know how much of that universe He is going to turn over to us. He made it all, created it out of

nothing, and He is going to run it to suit Himself. This is His universe. If you have wondered why a certain tree has a certain kind of leaf, it is because that is the way He wanted it. It was made by Him, and it was made for Him. We are going to enter into that someday: there is an inheritance prepared for us. I have never dwelt upon that very much because I feel that it is rather speculative. But I am sure that all of us wonder what it will be like when we are with Him in eternity. We do know it will be wonderful.

You and I are living down here in tents. Paul calls these bodies of ours just that -- tents. He says, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved . . ." ([2Cor. 5:1](#)). A tabernacle is a tent. This tent will go right back to the ground because the body is to be put into the ground at death. We will have moved out of our tent. He says, ". . . willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" ([2Cor. 5:8](#)). When we are absent from these old bodies down here, we will be present with the Lord. We will be at home with Him.

You may be living in a home that cost \$500,000. I have news for you: you are actually living in a flabby, old, frail tent -- all of us are. But one of these days we will have our glorified bodies, and then we will receive our inheritance! You can have your \$500,000 house -- you won't be in it long, anyway. Our new body is for eternity, and we will be at home with Him forever. This is the prospect ahead for the child of God. I'm rather looking forward to it. "All things were created by him, and for him."

And he is before all things, and by him all things consist [[Col. 1:17](#)]

5. "He is before all things." All fullness dwells in the preincarnate Christ, and all fullness dwells in the incarnate Christ. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" ([Col. 2:9](#)). We are made complete in Him. He was before all things. He is the preincarnate Christ.

6. "By him all things consist." He holds everything together. He maintains creation. He directs it. "Consist" is sunistemi which means to hold together. He is the super glue of the universe.

A few years ago in our lifetime, man did a very daring, and I think now, a very dastardly deed: he untied the atom. The Lord Jesus tied each one of those little fellows together when He created the atom. Man did what he called splitting the atom. Believe me, did he release power! Have you ever stopped to think of the tremendous power that there is in the atoms of this universe? If one bomb that we can hold in our hand can blow a whole area to smithereens, then how much power is tied up on this vast physical universe? Who is holding all that together? We are told that Christ not only created it but that He holds it together. I would say that holding it all together is a pretty big job. The Lord Jesus Christ is the One who is able to do that.

We have this same truth repeated for us in Hebrews: "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" ([Heb. 1:3](#)). He's a wonderful person, isn't He? He's a glorious person!

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence [[Col. 1:18](#)]

7. "He is the head of the body, the church." I believe this is the key to the Epistle to the Colossians, which is really a companion epistle to the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Philippians. In Ephesians we had the emphasis on the fact that the church is the body of Christ down here in the world. The emphasis was upon the body. In Colossians the emphasis is upon the head of the body, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Ephesians we read, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church" ([Eph. 1:22](#)). And finally, in Philippians we see the church with feet, walking through the world -- we see the experience of the church, the experience of the believer. These are companion epistles.

"The firstborn from the dead." Did you know that there is only one Man who has been raised in a glorified body today? He is the firstfruits of them that sleep. When a loved one who is in Christ dies and you put that body into the grave, you are just putting it into a motel. It is like putting it into a hotel for a few days, because there is a bright morning coming. The body is put to sleep, but the individual has gone to be with the Lord. When Christ comes to take His church out of this world, then that body is going to be raised on the basis of His resurrection. It is sown in corruption, but it will be raised in incorruption (see [1Cor. 15:42](#)). We shall be just as He is. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" ([1John 3:2](#)).

8. "That in all things he might have the preeminence." You cannot think of anything more wonderful than this. The will of Christ must prevail throughout all of God's creation. That is God's intention. Even in spite of the rebellion of man down here on earth, God says, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" ([Ps. 2:6](#)). God is moving forward today undeviatingly, unhesitatingly, uncompromisingly toward one goal. That goal is to put Jesus on the throne of this world which today is in rebellion against God. That is the objective of God.

For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell [[Col. 1:19](#)]

9. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." The fullness is the pleroma. That is one of the most important words in this epistle. Over in Philippians it was the kenosis. That is, it emphasized that Christ emptied Himself and became a servant; He emptied Himself of the glory that He had with the Father. He didn't empty Himself of His deity -- He was God when He came to this earth. The pleroma, the full fullness of God, dwells in Him.

When He was down here on this earth, the pleroma was at home in Jesus. He was 100 percent God -- not 99.44 percent, but 100 percent. That little baby that was lying on the bosom of Mary over nineteen hundred years ago seemed so helpless, but He could have spoken this universe out of existence. He is Man of very man; He is God of very God. That is who He is.

We can outline these verses from another perspective. I would like to do this for you in order to add to our understanding of this portion of Scripture.

1. Christ's relationship to the Father -- [verse 15](#)
2. Christ's relationship to creation -- [verses 16-17](#)
3. Christ's relationship to the church -- [verses 18-19](#)
4. Christ's relationship to the cross -- [verse 20](#)

### **Objective Work Of Christ For Sinners (1:20-23)**

We are going to see here the things Christ has done for us.

*And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven [Col. 1:20]*

"Having made peace through the blood of his cross" means that by His paying the penalty on the cross for your sin and my sin, peace has been made between God and the sinner. God does not approach man today and say to him, "Look here, fellow, I'm against you. You have been rebelling against Me. You are a sinner, and I am forced to punish you for that." No, God is saying something entirely different to the lost sinner today. He says to you and to me, "I have already borne the punishment, I have already paid the penalty for all your sin. I want you to know that you can come to Me. Peace has already been made in Christ Jesus, if you will just turn and come to Me."

This is what Paul meant when he wrote, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" ([Rom. 5:1](#)). Peace has been made through the blood of His cross. Paul puts forgiveness of sin right along with the blood of the cross. God can forgive because the penalty has already been paid. Jesus paid that penalty through the blood of His cross; therefore a righteous God can forgive you. God is not a disagreeable neighbor who is waiting around the corner to pounce on the sinner and to find fault with him. God has His arms outstretched and is saying, "Come, and I will give you redemption rest."

"By him to reconcile all things unto himself." Reconciliation is toward man; redemption is toward God. God is saying to all men today, "I am reconciled to you. Now will you be reconciled to Me?" That is the decision a man must make.

Paul explains this very clearly in his letter to the Corinthians. "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" ([2Cor. 5:18-20](#)).

A great many people have the idea that a man must do something to win God over to him. My friend, God is trying to win you over -- the shoe is on the other foot. God is reconciled. He is asking man to be reconciled to Him.

"Reconcile all things" -- some people take this statement and get the foolish notion that everybody is going to be saved. To understand this we need to pay a little attention to the

grammar that is here. What are the "all things"? We will see that it is limited to all things that are to be reconciled, those which are appointed for reconciliation.

Maybe it would help us if we look at [Philippians 3:8](#) where Paul says, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. . ." What are the "all things" here? Does Paul include everything in the whole world? No, it refers to all the things that Paul had to lose. In the verses just previous Paul had enumerated all the religious pluses which he had had in his life. It is all these things which Paul counted for loss. Paul couldn't lose something that he didn't have.

"Whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." You will notice that Paul limits the "all things" that are appointed to reconciliation -- he doesn't mention things under the earth. In [Ephesians 1:22](#) it says, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church." What are the "all things" that are going to be put under His feet? Well, in Philippians Paul wrote, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" ([Phil. 2:10](#)). Notice that all things are going to acknowledge the lordship of Jesus Christ -- all things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth. That doesn't mean that they are all reconciled. Paul makes no mention of things under the earth being reconciled to God.

My friend, don't listen to the deception, the siren song, that all is going to work out well. Don't think you can depend on God being nice and sweet and pleasant like a little old lady. Things in heaven and in earth are reconciled to God, but not the things under the earth. The things under the earth will have to bow to Him, but they are not reconciled to Him at all. This is the place and this is the life in which we need to be reconciled to God.

"Things in heaven" -- not only must we be made ready for heaven, but heaven must be made ready to receive us. The Lord Jesus said, ". . . I go to prepare a place for you" ([John 14:2](#)). By the Incarnation God came down to man; by the blood of Jesus man is brought up to God. This blood also purifies things in heaven according to [Hebrews 9:23-24](#). Heaven must also be reconciled.

[And you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind  
by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled \[Col. 1:21\]](#)

God did not wait until we promised to scrub our faces, put on our Sunday clothes, and go to Sunday school before He agreed to do this work of reconciliation. It was while you and I were in rebellion against Him, while we were doing wicked works, that He reconciled us to Himself. No man can say, "I'm lost because God has not made adequate provision for me." A man is lost because he wants to be lost, because he is in rebellion against God.

"That were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind." This reminds us that there is a mental alienation from God as well as a moral alienation. A great many people think that men are lost because they have committed some terrible sin. The reason people are lost is that their minds are alienated from God. I think this explains the fierce antagonism toward God on the part of the so-called intellectuals of our day. There is an open hatred and hostility toward God.

Some time ago I had the funeral of a certain movie star out here in California. The Hollywood crowd came to the funeral. One of the television newscasters commented on

the funeral, and I appreciated what he had to say about it. He said, "Today Hollywood heard something that it had never heard before." But I also saw something there at that funeral that I had never seen before. I had never seen so much hatred in the eyes of men and women as I saw when I attempted to present Jesus Christ and to explain how wonderful He is and how He wants to save people. There is an alienation in the mind and heart of man.

**In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight [Col. 1:22]**

"The body of his flesh" -- here is an explicit declaration that Christ suffered -- not just in appearance -- but He suffered in a real body. This directly countered one of the heresies of Gnosticism in Paul's day.

"To present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight." Unblameable means "without blemish." That was the requirement of the sacrificial animal in the Old Testament. You and I cannot present perfection to God, and God cannot accept anything short of perfection. That is the reason we cannot be saved by our works or by our character. We simply cannot meet the demands of a righteous God. But He is able to present us unblameable. Why? Because He took our place. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" ([2Cor. 5:21](#)).

Unproveable means "unaccusable or unchargeable." God is the One who justified us. If God declares us to be justified, who can bring any kind of a charge against us? He is the One who has cleared us of all guilt.

**If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister [Col. 1:23]**

This is not a conditional clause that is based on the future. The if that Paul uses here is the if of argument. It does not mean that something shall be if something else is true; rather it means that something was if something else is true. We would say, "Since ye continue in the faith grounded and settled." Paul's point is that we have been reconciled -- it is an accomplished fact. So if you are a child of God today, you will continue in the faith grounded and settled. You will not be moved away from the hope of the gospel which you have heard.

"Whereof I Paul am made a minister." Paul loved to look back and rest in his glorious privilege of being a minister of Jesus Christ. I consider that the greatest honor that can come to any person. I thank God every day for the privilege that He has given me of declaring His Word -- there is nothing quite like that.

### **Subjective Work Of Christ For Saints (1:24-29)**

**Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church [Col. 1:24]**

Let me give you a free translation of this verse. "Now I, Paul, rejoice in the midst of my sufferings for you, and I am filling up in my flesh that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake, which is the church." Paul is saying here that it was necessary for him to fill up in suffering that which was lacking in the suffering of Christ. Isn't that a startling statement? Someone will say, "Doesn't that contradict what you have been teaching all along? You say Christ suffered for us and paid the penalty and there is nothing we can do for salvation." That is very true, and this verse does not contradict that at all.

Paul was suffering in his body for the sake of Christ's body. The implication seems to be that there was something lacking in the sufferings of Christ. A second implication could be that it was necessary for Paul, and I think in turn for all believers, to make up that which is lacking. In other words, when Paul suffers for them, it completes the suffering of Christ.

All of this is rather startling because we have just called attention to the fact that this epistle teaches the fullness of Christ. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" ([Col. 2:9](#)). Everything is centered in Him. He is to have the preeminence in all things. Yet here it would seem that there is still something to be done.

Paul is writing this epistle from prison, and he says he has fulfilled all his sufferings. You may remember that the Lord Jesus revealed to Ananias the reason He had saved Paul and how He was going to use him. "But the Lord said unto him [Ananias], Go thy way: for he [Paul] is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" ([Acts 9:15-16](#)). Now Paul writes from prison and says that he has fulfilled that.

In our discussion of this verse I want to make one thing very, very clear. The sufferings of Paul were not redemptive. There was no merit in his suffering for others or even for himself as concerning redemption. Paul is very careful in his selection of words here. When Paul speaks of the redemption of Christ, he does not speak of suffering but of a cross, a death, and His blood.

There are two kinds of suffering. There is ministerial suffering and there is mediatorial suffering. Christ's suffering for us was mediatorial. Actually, we can consider the sufferings of Christ and divide them into two further classifications. There is a sharp distinction between them. We will do that to clarify this passage of Scripture.

1. There are the sufferings of Christ which He endured and in which we cannot share.

He suffered as a man. He endured human suffering. He bore the suffering that is common to humanity when He was born in Bethlehem at His incarnation over nineteen hundred years ago. When He was born, did He cry like other little babies that come into the world? I have wondered about that, and I rather think that He did. He was clad in the garment of that frail flesh that you and I have. He could get hungry. He could become thirsty. He experienced loneliness. He suffered anguish and pain and sorrow. He could go to sleep in the boat because He was weary and tired. Those are human sufferings. We all have those.

Paul wrote, "For every man shall bear his own burden" ([Gal. 6:5](#)). There are certain burdens we must each bear alone. We are born alone. So was our Lord. We feel pain alone. There are certain problems in life that each of us must face, and we face them alone. There is a sorrow that comes that no one can share with us. We become sick, and no one can take our place.

When my daughter was just a little girl I remember crossing the desert of Arizona coming back from the East. It was the hot summertime, and she had been sick. My wife took her temperature, and it was up to 104 degrees. We took her to the hospital in Phoenix. As she was lying there with that high temperature, I would have given anything in the world at that moment if I could have taken her place. I would gladly have taken that fever for her, but I couldn't do it. We can't share such things.

There will come a time when you and I will go down through the valley of the shadow of death. Humanly speaking, we will each die alone. That is the reason it is so wonderful to be a Christian and to know that Jesus is with us at that time when no one else can go through death with us.

Jesus Christ suffered human suffering. That is a suffering which cannot be shared.

The second suffering which He could not share was His suffering as the Son of God. He is God, yet He identified Himself with mankind. No mortal has ever had to endure what He went through. He was made like unto His brethren, and He suffered; but He suffered as the Son of God.

We see this suffering in [Psalm 69](#). It tells us in [verses 11](#) and 12 that He was the song of the drunkards in that little town of Nazareth. And He said that He made sackcloth His garment. Oh, what He suffered because He was the Son of God! He was arrested. The soldiers of the high priest mocked Him. They put a robe on Him and a crown of thorns. They played a Roman game known as "Hot Hand" in which they blindfolded Him and then all the soldiers would hit Him with their fists. One of the soldiers would not hit Him, and when they removed the blindfold He was supposed to say which one had not. Even if He named the right one, they would never have admitted that He was right. Then they would put the blindfold on and play the game again. They all pounded Him until the Lord Jesus Christ was marred more than any man. They had beaten His face to a pulp before they ever put Him on the cross. He suffered in a way that no other man has suffered, because He suffered as the Son of God.

And then He suffered as the sacrifice for the sin of the world. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and none of us can enter into that suffering at all. We can appropriate His death for us, we can recognize the fact that He took our place, but we cannot enter into it. He alone went to the cross. He was forsaken of God and forsaken by men. His was not the blood of martyrdom; His was the blood of sacrifice.

In His first three hours on the cross, man did his worst. It was light from nine o'clock until noon; man was there at his evil worst. In the second three hours, from noon until three o'clock, it was dark; that was when God was doing His best. At that time the cross became an altar on which the Lamb of God was slain to take away the sin of the world.

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust . . ." ([1Pet. 3:18](#)). That's a suffering that you and I cannot bear; He could not share that with anyone else.

2. On the other hand, there are the sufferings Christ endured which we can share. These are the sufferings which Paul refers to in [verse 24](#).

There is the suffering for righteousness' sake. In the synagogue in Nazareth, His own hometown, Jesus said, "But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth . . ." ([John 8:40](#)). He suffered for righteousness' sake, and we are told very definitely that we will do the same: "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye . . ." ([1Pet. 3:14](#)). Paul wrote to young Timothy: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" ([2Tim. 3:12](#)).

May I say to you that if you are going to live for God, if you are going to take a stand for the right, you will find that you will be passed by. God's men are passed by today in the distribution of earthly honors. The world will damn the man of God with faint praise, and they will praise him with faint damns. That is the way the world treats God's men today. Athletes are lauded, people in the entertainment world are praised, politicians are praised, and professors are honored; but the man of God is not praised. If you stand for the things that are right in this world, you will suffer for righteousness' sake. Paul understood this, and he wrote, "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" ([Rom. 8:36](#)). That will be the lot of anyone who stands for God.

Then there is the suffering in the measure we identify ourselves with Christ for the proclamation of the gospel. John wrote, ". . . because as he is, so are we in this world" ([1John 4:17](#)). The Lord Jesus made it very clear, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" ([John 15:18-19](#)). If you are not of the world, the world will hate you.

The popularity of the Christian with the world is in inverse ratio to his popularity with Christ. If you are popular with the world as a Christian, then you are not popular with Christ. If you are going to be popular with Christ, you are not going to be popular in this world. The child of God is to take his rightful place and identify himself with Christ. When we suffer for Christ, the Lord Jesus is also suffering through us, through His church.

You remember when the Lord Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus, He said, ". . . Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" ([Acts 9:4](#)). That young Pharisee was startled and puzzled. Saul of Tarsus thought that he was persecuting Christians. He was shocked to learn that he was actually persecuting the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is what Peter wrote about our suffering: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" ([1Pet. 4:12-13](#)).

There is one thing for certain: If the gospel is to go forward today, someone must suffer. The late Dr. George Gill said that when a child is born into this world, some woman must travail in pain; and the reason there are not more people being born again is because there are not enough believers who are willing to travail. Suffering is not popular -- but that is what Paul is talking about in this verse.

All of us would like to see revival. We talk glibly about witnessing and about living for God and all that sort of thing. My friend, may I say to you that if the gospel is going to go forward today and if people are going to be saved, someone is going to have to pay a price. How much are you paying to get out the Word of God? What is it really costing you? Are you willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel?

**Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God [Col. 1:25]**

The word dispensation means economy -- even by transliteration; it is a stewardship. We talk of political economy, domestic economy, business economy. God deals with the world on the basis of different economies or stewardships, but they have always been based on the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Before Jesus was born into this world, men brought a little lamb as a sacrifice, and they looked forward to the coming of Christ. They were not saved by that little lamb; but they brought the lamb in faith, and they were saved by the Christ who would some day die for them. That was the economy or the stewardship which God has set for the Jews in the Old Testament. We don't bring a little lamb for a sacrifice today because it is now an historical fact that Christ has already come. All we have to do today is trust Him.

"The dispensation of God which is given to me for you," Paul writes to the gentile people in Colosse. They are a part of this new dispensation. The Gentiles are to be included in the church.

"To fulfill the word of God." This was something that had been hidden in the Old Testament, but now God has declared that the gospel must go to the Gentiles.

**Even the mystery which hath been laid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints [Col. 1:26]**

A "mystery" is something that had not been revealed in the Old Testament but is now revealed. We learn in Ephesians that the mystery was not the fact that Gentiles would be saved -- that was known in the Old Testament. The mystery, the new thing, was that God would now put Israel on the same basis as the Gentiles. All men are lost; all men have sinned; all men have come short of the glory of God. Now God is taking both Jews and Gentiles, men out of all races, and He is putting them into a new body which is called the church. That was never revealed in the Old Testament, but it is now being revealed.

"Now is made manifest to his saints" -- Paul wasn't the only one who understood this mystery. God was making it known to His saints in that day.

**To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory [Col. 1:27]**

"Christ in you, the hope of glory" -- we are in Christ. The moment you put your trust in Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit baptizes you and puts you in the body of believers. You and I have been brought into something new, the church, and the church has a glorious prospect ahead of it.

**Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus**  
**[Col. 1:28]**

"Whom we preach." The gospel is not what we preach, but it is whom we preach. No man has ever preached the gospel who hasn't preached Christ. Jesus Christ is the gospel. He is eternal life. John wrote that he was going to show us eternal life, that he had seen eternal life (see [1John 1:1-2](#)). Whom had John seen? He'd seen Christ. And, my friend, today you either have Him or you don't have Him. The gospel is Christ -- what He has done for us in His death and resurrection and what He is going to do in the future.

"Warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom." I believe there are two commands here for ministers today -- these are two things we should be doing. We are to preach the gospel in order to win sinners to Christ and to save them from the wrath that is to come, and we are to teach every man in all wisdom. In other words, we are to seek to build up men and women so that they may grow in grace and be faithful members of the body of Christ; they are to be encouraged to serve Christ in the local assembly.

I am told that my teaching of the Bible helps the local churches, and that is the reason I have the support of so many pastors across this country. If I am not doing that, then I would have to say I am not fulfilling my ministry.

"That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Perfect actually means "complete or mature." This is the goal of the teaching of the Word of God.

**Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily** **[Col. 1:29]**

Striving means "to agonize." Paul is giving us his very personal testimony: "This is what I'm laboring, striving to do."

"According to his working, which worketh in me mightily." Oh, this should be the desire of everyone today who is working for Christ -- that He would work in us mightily to do two things: to get out the gospel that men might be saved and then to build them up in the faith. These are the two things the church should be doing today.

## Chapter 2

**THEME:** Christ, the answer to philosophy; Christ, the answer to ritual

In the first fifteen verses of this chapter we will see that Christ is the answer to philosophy. The remainder of the chapter will show that He is the answer to ritual. The answer to philosophy is for the head; the answer to ritual is for the heart.

Christianity has always been in the danger of sailing between Scylla and Charybdis. On one extreme Christianity is in danger of evaporating into a philosophy -- then it becomes nothing but steam. The opposite danger is that it will freeze into a form and become nothing more than a ritual. There is a real peril on either side. But the Lord Jesus called Himself the Water of Life. He is neither steam nor ice -- neither can sustain life. That is why we need to guard against following the line of philosophy or following the line of ritual. Christianity is Christ!

There were five errors that endangered the Colossian church which Paul will deal with in this chapter. They were:

1. Enticing words -- [verses 4-7](#)
2. Philosophy -- [verses 8-13](#)
3. Legality -- [verses 14-17](#)
4. Mysticism -- [verses 18-19](#)
5. Asceticism -- [verses 20-23](#)

These are still dangers today. I think that most of us could sit down with this chapter and go through it to make an inventory of our spiritual lives. It would show us the direction in which we are going. A great many even so-called Bible believers have slipped into one or more of these errors.

## **Christ, The Answer To Philosophy (2:1-15)**

(For the Head)

For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh [\[Col. 2:1\]](#)

Laodicea was near to Colosse. I have been to Laodicea but not to Colosse. Yet I stood on the high point of Laodicea and looked across the Lycos valley. There alongside the mountains at the gates of Phrygia, which lead into the Orient, were the ruins of Colosse. It was a great city, but it was not nearly as great as Laodicea. In Laodicea was one of the seven churches of the Book of Revelation; it was the church that is described as being lukewarm.

"Conflict" is our word agony. MacPhail calls this a prayer of agony. Paul saw that there was a grave danger in Colosse and in Laodicea, and it caused great conflict in the heart of the apostle. They were in danger of going off in one of two directions. There is still such danger, and we need a lot of agonizing prayer for the church today. This explains why we find the Laodiceans' lukewarm condition in the Book of Revelation: they had lost sight of the person of Christ. Christ is the answer to man's head; He is also the answer to man's heart.

"For as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." Colosse is located about 100 miles inland from ancient Ephesus. When Paul came through that area (which he did twice), he did not come down to Colosse and Laodicea. Even when he attempted to go down into Asia on his second missionary journey, the Spirit of God forbade him; so he turned and took the northern route. Then when he came on his third missioanry journey, walking over the land, he again took the northern route, perhaps because he was already familiar

with it. It is clear that he had not been to these cities because he writes, "and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." This might be interpreted to mean that many new believers had come into the church since he had been there and that they had not seen his face. That meaning is highly unlikely; I think it means that Paul had never been there.

**That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ [Col. 2:2]**

"That their hearts might be comforted." Heart indicates the entire inner man. That means the whole propulsive nature of man. He is praying that their hearts, their humanity, their whole persons might be comforted.

"Being knit together in love" means compacted in love. Love will draw them together. After all, a church is not united by gifts or even by what we term today as spirituality. The bond that unites believers is love. It is the cement that holds us together -- it is the Elmer's glue of the church.

"Unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding." Full assurance is an interesting expression; it literally means "to be under full sail." It means that believers should be moving along spiritually -- they should be moving along for God.

"To the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." I grant that is a rather awkward expression, and a better translation would be: "the mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ." Better and easier yet might be, "the mystery of God, even Christ." I think that is the correct meaning of it.

What is "the mystery of God, even Christ"? The church is the mystery, for it had not been revealed in the Old Testament. God was going to save Gentiles -- that had been made clear in the Old Testament, and He did save them. But on the Day of Pentecost God started a new thing. He began to call out a group of people into the body of believers, baptized by the Spirit of God into this body. This is what Paul is explaining in [1Corinthians 12:12](#): "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." You see, Christ had a physical body while He was here on this earth, and He has a spiritual body down here today. That body is the body of believers that have trusted Him, and the body is called Christ." That is why the Lord said to Saul of Tarsus. "Why are you persecuting me?" (see [Acts 9:4](#)). Saul was persecuting Him personally. The church is Christ -- it belongs to Him. "The mystery of God, even Christ."

In [1Corinthians 12:13](#), Paul goes on to say of the church: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. We have all been baptized into Christ. We have all been made to drink into one Spirit. That is what brings the unity into the church. We are never commanded to make a unity of the church. It is impossible to join some organization and to expect that organization to bring about church unity. The Holy Spirit has already made that unity. He puts all believers into one body, and we are told to keep the unity of the Spirit. Our problem today is that we are not keeping the unity of the Spirit.

[In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge \[Col. 2:3\]](#)

All that we need is in Christ. If only we could learn that! He is the reservoir of all knowledge.

In the science building where I went to college there was a motto on the bulletin board. It hung there the whole time that I was in college, and it made a great impression on me. I'm afraid I remember it better than I do the sciences that I studied there. It said, "Next to knowing is knowing where to find out." I love that. I willingly admit that I don't know everything -- I'm sure you have found that out by now. But I know where to find out, because I know Somebody who does know. Christ has been made unto us wisdom. We need to rest in that. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Him -- how wonderful this is!

1. Now Paul will discuss the error of enticing words.

[And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words \[Col. 2:4\]](#)

He is going to deal with the matter of philosophy and enticing words. Philosophy and psychology have been substituted for the Bible, and this is the thing that is enticing to so many young preachers in our seminaries today. I am amazed to find that some of these men with a Ph.D. degree from a seminary know so little about the Bible! They know all about Bultmann and Kant and Plato, but they don't seem to know very much about the Word of God. That is the great problem of our day.

There was that same danger in Colosse and also in Laodicea. I think that is what actually killed the church in Colosse, and it made the church in Laodicea the weakest of the seven churches in Asia Minor. It was in the worst spiritual condition, and yet the people thought that they were well off. These cities were wealthy. They boasted of their wealth and affluence and also of their knowledge, but they were blind to their true spiritual condition.

Paul says, "Don't let any man beguile you with enticing words." Beguile means "to victimize." Enticing words are a lot of oratory or sweet-talk.

I heard of a theologian who uses big words and tries to be very deep in his thinking. He was talking to a group of men for about half an hour. Another man walked up to the group and asked one of the men on the outside of the circle, "What's he talking about?" The fellow answered, "He hasn't said yet." That is the problem -- he never would say. All he did was talk with enticing words.

I know a dear lady who attends a certain church because, as she says, "I just love to go there because the preacher uses such flowery language and he makes me feel so good all over." That is the danger today. A great many people love this pretense toward intellectuality among preachers rather than the simple Word of God.

I started preaching before I went to college, and then in college I was exposed to liberalism because I went to a liberal college. That was all I knew at that time; I was not

grounded in the Word of God at all, even though I had had a wonderful pastor. I thought I wanted to be an intellectual preacher -- I thought that would be great. I thank God that that was knocked out of me in my second year of college. I became concerned with teaching the Word of God.

Paul warns us to beware that they will beguile us with enticing words and will victimize us. Their words cause many people to follow a certain individual instead of the Word of God. Like the Pied Piper of Hamlin, he starts playing, and the unwary start following.

**For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ [Col. 2:5]**

At this time the word that was coming back to Paul was that this church was standing.

"Beholding your order." Order is a military term, and it means "to stand shoulder to shoulder." That is what believers ought to be doing -- standing shoulder to shoulder. Instead, many today are trying to undermine or take advantage of another believer. Oh that we could stand shoulder to shoulder with one another!

Stedfastness means "to have a solid front, to be immovable." The literal translation would be "stereotype," or the opposite of movable type. Paul writes this same thought to the Corinthians: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" ([1Cor. 15:58](#)). The Colossian church had a reputation for stedfastness, and Paul wanted them to continue like that and not be led away by the oratory of some.

**As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him [Col. 2:6]**

What does it mean to be saved, to be a Christian? Well, I have a letter from a man who tells me that I am not saved because I have frankly admitted that I am not perfect, that I do not keep all the Ten Commandments. He says that I am not saved until I do. My friend, salvation is to receive a person, and that person is Jesus Christ -- "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord."

"So walk ye in him." Now that you have received Him, walk in Him, walk in the Spirit. Walking is not a balloon ascension. A great many people think the Christian life is some great, overwhelming experience and you take off like a rocket going out into space. That's not where you live the Christian life. Rather, it is in your home, in your office, in the schoolroom, on the street. The way you get around in this life is to walk. You are to walk in Christ. God grant that you and I might be joined to Him in our daily walk.

**Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving [Col. 2:7]**

"Rooted" means rooted like a tree, and a tree is a living thing. And we are to be "built up" as a house. A house is not a living thing, but it requires a tremendous foundation. Paul tells us in Ephesians that the foundation is Jesus Christ. Having received Christ, we are to walk in Him. Doing what? Being rooted, drawing our life from Him as a tree, and built up in Him, your faith resting upon Him.

That is why he adds, "and stablished in the faith." A better translation would be "by your faith." Faith is the means by which you and I lay hold of Christ.

2. Now Paul moves on to discuss the danger of philosophy.

**Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit,  
after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and  
not after Christ [Col. 2:8]**

"Beware" -- Look out! Stop, look, and listen!

"Lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit." If you were to follow the history of philosophy beginning with Plato, including many of the church fathers, and coming down to more recent times (including Kant, Locke, and Bultmann, who seems to be the craze with some theologians right now), you would find that none of them have a high view of the inspiration of the Word of God. They are looking for answers to the problems of life, but they will not be found in philosophy.

A true philosopher is a seeker after truth, but truth is not found in human wisdom. Christ is the answer, the answer to philosophy. Paul wrote, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom . . ." (1Cor. 1:30, italics mine). But false philosophy is like a blind man looking in a dark room for a black cat that isn't there -- there is no hope for its search for truth. Paul warns the Colossians to beware of this.

"After the tradition of men." You may remember that the Lord Jesus condemned the religious rulers in His day because they taught the tradition of men rather than the Word of God. Very frankly, this is one of the reasons I have turned to the teaching of the total Word of God. It is so easy to lift out some peculiar interpretation of some particular passage and then ride that like a hobby horse. I believe in prophecy, but there is more in the Word of God than just prophecy. Some preachers dwell on the Christian life. That certainly is in the Bible, but there is more than just that. This is why I think it is so important for us to study the total Word of God.

"After the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." The Greek word for "rudiments" is stoicheion, which means "that which is basic," the ABC's. Some people try to build their Christian living on some worldly system that seems so simple. Our base is not philosophy or a worldly system; our base is Christ.

Now Paul will speak of Christ:

**For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily [Col. 2:9]**

In Him dwelleth all the pleroma -- this is a clear-cut statement of the deity of Christ. It could not be stated any stronger than it is here. In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead -- not just 99.44 percent but 100 percent.

**And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality  
and power [Col. 2:10]**

You "are complete in him." "Complete" is a nautical term, and it could be translated in this very vivid way: You are ready for the voyage of life in Him. Isn't that a wonderful

way of saying it? You are ready for the voyage of life in Christ, and whatever you need for the voyage of life you will find in Him. This is where we say that Christ is the answer. What is your question? What is it you need today? Are you carried away by human philosophy? Then turn to Christ. Are you carried away by enticing words? Are you carried away by the systems and traditions of men? Turn to Christ.

**In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ [Col. 2:11]**

Paul is telling them to get rid of that which is outward. The real circumcision is the New Birth. He explained this to the Galatians: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" ([Gal. 6:15](#)). You and I become new creatures when we come to Christ and trust Him as our Savior. We rest in Him; we are identified with Him.

**Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead [Col. 2:12]**

Lord Lyndhurst was the Lord Chancellor of Great Britain and possessed a sharp legal mind. He made this statement: "I know pretty well what evidence is; and I tell you, such evidence as that for the Resurrection has never broken down yet." The death and resurrection of Christ is an historical fact. When Christ died you and I died with Him; He took our place. And when He was raised, we were raised in Him, and we are now joined to a living Christ. It is so important for us to see that we are joined to a living Savior.

It is so important to keep in mind that no outward ceremony brings us to Christ. The issue is whether or not we are born again, whether we really know Christ as Savior. If we do know Him, we are identified with Him. Identification with Christ is "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ," which is a spiritual circumcision.

When you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit baptizes you into the body of Christ. It is by this baptism that we are identified with Christ, and we are also "risen with him" -- joined to the living Christ.

"Through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead" -- salvation is accomplished by the resurrection power of God. It's not some philosophy; it's not some gimmick; it's not some little system; it's not the taking of some course that will enable you to live for God.

**And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses [Col. 2:13]**

Salvation is not the improvement of the old nature; it is the impartation of a new nature.

Remember that Paul had to deal with two systems of Greek philosophy which were very popular in his day. They were diametrically opposed to each other, but they both came out at the same end of the horn. One philosophy was Stoicism, and the other was Epicureanism.

The Stoic taught that man was to live nobly and that death could not matter. The idea was to hold the appetites in check and to become indifferent to changing conditions. In effect they said, "Be not uplifted by good fortune nor cast down by adversity." They believed that man is more than circumstances and that the soul is greater than the universe. It was a brave philosophy, you see. But the problem was how to live it. It was like the people who say that they are living by the Sermon on the Mount when actually they are many miles from it.

The Epicurean taught that all is uncertain. "We know not whence we came; we know not whither we go. We only know that after a brief life we disappear from this scene, and it is vain to deny ourselves any present joy in view of the possible future ill. Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

The interesting thing to observe is that both these systems attempted to deal with the flesh -- that is, the old nature that you and I have -- not the meat on our bones. The old nature works through our old habits, old desires, old testings and temptations. How are we going to bring that under control?

There are all kinds of gimmicks and systems that are set before us today to enable us to live the Christian life. I know people who have been to Bible conferences where the Christian life is taught, and at home they have a drawer filled with notebooks. But they are not doing so well in living the Christian life. Why not? Because we need to recognize this one important thing that Paul is saying here: we are joined to the living Christ. Now, if you are joined to Him, my friend, you are going to live as if you are. How close are you to Him? Do you walk with Him? Do you turn to Him in all the emergencies of this life? Is He the One who is the very center of your life?

3. As Paul turns now to the error of legality, we will again find that the answer is to come to the Word of God and through it to come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

A glory gilds the sacred page,  
Majestic like the sun.  
It sheds a light on every age;  
It gives but borrows none.

**Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,  
which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to  
his cross [Col. 2:14]**

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us." This old flesh of ours has been condemned. When Christ died, He died for you and me; He paid the penalty for our sin.

When the Lord Jesus died, Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross: "This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews" (see [John 19:19](#)). He was being publicly executed on the grounds that He had led in a rebellion. This was, of course, not true, but that was the charge against Him. When the people standing there read that sign they understood that He had been disloyal to Caesar in that He had made Himself to be a king. To them that was the reason He was dying on a cross.

But when God looked upon that cross, He saw an altar on which the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world was offered. God saw another inscription there high above the inscription that man had written. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." What did God write on that cross? He wrote the ordinances -- He wrote the Ten Commandments. He wrote a law which I cannot keep, ordinances which I am guilty of breaking. When Christ died there, He did not die because He broke them; He was sinless. But it was because I broke them, because I am a sinner, and because you are. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" ([Rom. 3:23](#)).

Therefore, my friend, if God has saved you and raised you from the dead and joined you to a living Christ, why should you go back to a law that you couldn't keep in the first place? You can't even keep the law today in your own power and in your own strength. You see, the law was given to discipline the old nature. But now the believer is given a new nature, and the law has been removed as a way of life.

Let me give you an illustration. A man once came to me and said, "I'll give you \$100 if you will show me where the Sabbath day has been changed." I answered, "I don't think it has been changed. Saturday is Saturday, it is the seventh day of the week, and it is the Sabbath day. I realize our calendar has been adjusted and can be off a few days, but we won't even consider that point. The seventh day is still Saturday and is still the Sabbath day." He got a gleam in his eye and said, "Then why don't you keep the Sabbath day if it hasn't been changed?" I answered, "The day hasn't changed, but I have been changed. I've been given a new creation. We celebrate the first day because that is the day He rose from the grave." That is what it means when he says that the ordinances which were against us have been nailed to His cross.

And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it [[Col. 2:15](#)]

The spiritual victory that Christ won for the believer is of inestimable value.

### **Christ, The Answer To Ritual (for The Heart) (2:16-23)**

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ [[Col. 2:16-17](#)]

A believer is not to observe ordinances that are only ritual and liturgical; they have no present value. God did give certain rituals for the people in the Old Testament. So what has changed? Paul explains that they were merely "a shadow of things to come." We get our word photograph from the Greek word used here for "shadow." All the rituals of the Law in the Old Testament were like a negative or a picture -- they were just pictures of Christ. Now that Christ has come, we have the reality. Why should we go back and look at a picture?

I remember that during the days of World War II, I performed the wedding ceremony of two wonderful young people here in Pasadena. (We knew a number of young men who went to war, and some of them gave their lives.) This young fellow was sent overseas,

and while he was gone, his young bride carried the biggest purse I have ever seen (and I have seen some big ones). In that purse she carried a huge photograph of him. Most people carry a little bitty picture with them, but not this girl; she carried a photograph that you could have hung on the wall. She was everlastingly drawing it out and showing it to people. She'd say, "Isn't he handsome?" (Between you and me, he wasn't what I would call a handsome boy. He was a wonderful boy, but he was not handsome.) Then the day came when the war was over, and he was coming home. She went all the way to Seattle, Washington, to meet him. Now what do you think she did when she saw him coming down the gangplank? She hadn't seen him in a couple of years. Do you think she took out that picture and looked at it? Do you think she looked at the picture and said, "Isn't he wonderful?" I don't think she even had that picture with her! She saw him and when she saw him, she didn't need a picture -- she threw her arms around him.

Many of us need to get off the merry-go-round of attending seminars, adapting gimmicks, jumping through everybody's little hoop, and taking a shortcut to the abundant life. Have we really arrived? Some think they have. Let's stop carrying around a faded photograph when we have the reality -- "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

#### 4. We come now to the warning against mysticism.

Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God [\[Col. 2:18-19\]](#)

This is another point at which people get off the track. Paul is here condemning the Gnostics who made a pretense of wisdom. And we have today in our church circles a great many folk who assume a pious superiority -- they are what I call "spiritual snobs." It has been my experience that these people generally are very ignorant of the Bible. "Intruding into those things which he hath not seen" -- that's a pretense, putting on, acting like you have something that you don't really have.

"And not holding the Head" means that such people have a loose relationship with Christ. In other words, their head is not screwed on as it should be, by the way.

#### 5. The final warning is against the error of asceticism.

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

(Touch not; taste not; handle not;

Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh [\[Col. 2:20-23\]](#)

Here again, when Paul says "if ye be dead with Christ," the translation would be better as, "since ye be dead with Christ." In other words, since you have died when Christ died, do not return to pre-cross living.

I think, very candidly, that this is a terrible problem. There are people who follow some passing fad in the church. A few years ago the fad was that women couldn't use lipstick (and some of them sure looked pale). I remember when I was teaching in a school that wouldn't permit the girls to wear lipstick, a girl came to me and asked, "Do you think it is all right to use lipstick?" I answered her, "There are a lot of these folk around here who would look better if they used a little lipstick. God wants us to look the best that we can. Even when we have little to work with, we ought to do the best we can with it."

What we are dealing with here is "the pride that apes humility" that Juvenal speaks of. It is the pride that says, "I deny myself, and I don't do these things. Just look at me, I'm really sprouting wings, and I shine my halo every morning."

"Not in any honour" means it is not of any value. My friend, that is asceticism that is no good. God wants you to rejoice in Him; Christ wants you to be close to Him. And if you're going to walk with Him, my friend, you are going to have a good time!

## Chapter 3

**THEME:** Christ, the fullness of God, poured out in life through believers; thoughts and affections of believers are heavenly; living of believers is holy

We come now to the line of division in this little epistle, which conforms to Paul's regular way of dividing his epistles. He always gives the doctrinal section and then the practical section. Chapters 3 and 4 comprise the practical section of Colossians.

We have seen the preeminence of Christ in chapters 1 -- 2. We have seen Him as He is, a member of the Trinity. He is very man of very man, but He is very God of very God. He is preeminent in creation because He is the Creator. He is preeminent in redemption for He is the Redeemer. He is preeminent in the church because He is the One who gave Himself for the church.

Now we have come to the place where Paul will insist that He must be made preeminent in our lives. Today we hear a great deal of talk about dedication. Well, what is dedication? A very brief definition is: Dedication is Christ preeminent in our lives.

You cannot just say, "I am a dedicated Christian," and then live your life as you please, as a great many people are trying to do today. No, if Christ is preeminent in your life, then you are going to live out His life down here on earth. Paul has already made this clear in the doctrinal section: "For in him [in Christ] dwelleth all the fulness [pleroma] of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him . . ." ([Col. 2:9-10](#)). You are made full in Him. You are ready for the voyage of life in Him. In other words, Christ is really the solution to all the problems of life.

Paul has discussed the different things that lead people away from the person of Christ. He has warned against enticing words which carry people away by great oratory. He has

warned against philosophy, legality, mysticism, and asceticism. All these lead people away from the person of Christ.

The Christian life is to live out the life of Christ. You and I will find in Christ Jesus all that we need. In this practical section of the epistle, Paul will show us Christ, the fullness of God, poured out in life through believers -- that is the only way He can be poured out.

### **Thoughts And Affections Of Believers Are Heavenly (3:1-4)**

**If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above,  
where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God [Col. 3:1]**

Again, this is not the if of condition; it is really the if of argument. We saw this same thing back in [Colossians 1:23](#) where we read: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled. . ." There was no question about their continuing in the faith grounded and settled. The lives of these Colossian Christians evidences their salvation. What was the evidence? It was faith, hope, and love -- the fruit of the Spirit was in their lives. "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus" -- the word had gotten around that they had a living faith in Christ Jesus; "and of the love which ye have to all the saints" -- they loved the believers ([Col. 1:4](#)). Love among the believers is so important, and I do not mean this sentimental stuff that you hear so much about today. For instance, if you are a minister, you evidence your love for your congregation if you give them the Word of God, and you show your love for your pastor as a member of the church if you support his Bible-teaching ministry. My friend, love is very practical -- it gets right down where the rubber meets the road. If it doesn't, it's no good at all. Love is that which manifests itself in reality. The Colossians had faith, and they had love. They also had hope: "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven . ." ([Col. 1:5](#)). That hope is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His church. These three -- faith, hope, and love -- were the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the believers in Colosse. Therefore, when Paul says, "if," it is the if of argument. [Verse 1](#) here in chapter 3 would be better translated, "Since you are risen with Christ."

"Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Where is Christ today? He's sitting at the right hand of God.

What are we to do today? We are to "seek those things which are above." Seek is an interesting word. It actually means "having an urgency and a desire and an ambition." There should be an excitement that goes with seeking spiritual things.

When we watch the Olympic games, we see folk who are running or performing some athletic feat to win a gold medal. Believe me, those folk are seeking. I don't see many saints looking for gold medals today, but we are to be seeking Christ with that kind of urgency.

"Those things which are above" -- these are the things of Christ. I want you to note that Paul is not saying that we should seek such courses as are offered today that are a mixture of pseudopsychology with a smattering of Bible. This kind of teaching is handed out in a few night classes, and then some poor crippled Christians think they have the answers to the problems of life -- all the way from a neurotic mother-in-law to a boss who is a dirty old man. They think some little course will teach them how to treat everybody and every

problem. They consider it a do-it-yourself kit, a kind of an open sesame to a new life. Now I say to you, and I say it very carefully, you will only experience the new life as you "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

I will get even more personal in my illustration. You cannot find the answers in anything I have produced -- either a book or a tape-recorded message. Now I am stepping on some toes, including my own toes. A couple came to me this past summer at a conference and said, "Dr. McGee, we have a certain tape of yours, and we play it at least once a week and listen to it." My reaction was that they had better burn that tape. I had the feeling they were beginning to worship that tape and that tape wasn't getting them through to Christ.

And now I'm really going to step on toes: Paul doesn't say here to seek out and listen to any preacher or teacher! May I say this to you very kindly and very frankly: Don't make Dr. McGee or any man your idol. If you do, you have an idol who has feet of clay. You would be looking to a man who is just like you are. I make a lot of mistakes. I'm not near the man I'd like to be, nor the husband I'd like to be, nor the father or grandfather I'd like to be. Don't make anything man produces a god for yourself.

The purpose of this poor preacher is to get out the Word of God to you so that you can see the living Christ and get through to Him. If the Holy Spirit doesn't use my ministry to get you through to the living Christ, then I have failed -- then I have fallen flat on my face, and I am willing to quit. I believe with all my heart that the Bible is the one Book which reveals the living Christ, and that is my purpose in teaching it.

I would like to give you an illustration of this. I went to school with a fellow who was a Canadian, and he told me about his first trip to Niagara Falls. (By the way, Mrs. McGee and I saw it for the first time this past summer. When we were looking over the falls, I said to her, "Honey, I promised you we would go to Niagara Falls on our honeymoon. I think we are still on our honeymoon, and here we are.") Well, my classmate told me that as a boy he got on a train on the Canadian side of the falls, which is the prettier side. He said, "When I got off the train, I could hear the roar of the falls, but I couldn't see them. I began to move toward the sound, and I came to a big building. I went into that building, which was like a Union Station in the United States: there was the popcorn vendor, the soda pop machine, the gift shop, and candy papers, chewing gum wrappers and even chewing gum on the floor. People were sitting all around. I was really disappointed, but I could still hear the roar of the falls. Then I looked down to the end of the building, and there I saw the biggest picture I had ever seen in my life. The frame of the picture took in most of the end of that building. It was a picture of Niagara Falls. I couldn't believe that right there at the falls they would have a picture of them. I began to walk down toward that picture, and as I drew closer to it, I began to realize that through a frame I was looking at the real, living, running Niagara Falls!"

My friend, when you read the Bible, you are not looking at a dead person. You are looking at the real, living Christ. He is the One at God's right hand. We are to seek those things which are above -- we are to seek Him. That is why I have a ministry of teaching through the Bible. There is no shortcut. Some have suggested that I cut it down to a one-year program, but that certainly is not adequate. And, really, five years is not adequate. Some have suggested that I lengthen it to ten years, but that is not feasible for me. Even if

we took ten, or even twenty years, we would not know it all. At the end of his life Paul could still say: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" ([Phil. 3:10](#)).

Real study of the Word of God will get you through to the living Christ. Let me illustrate this with a letter from a listener to our radio program:

When we were studying Romans and Corinthians, I began to realize just how much of a carnal Christian I really was. I began to desire much more than that. So I began to pray that I might truly know Christ as God would want me to. Nothing happened for a while, but I kept praying. And then God did answer my prayer. One day you said that God sees us in Christ, and it was as though some dark, hidden thing had been brought out into the light. I had read Ephesians many times before, but that day your message really struck home. It is a wonderful thing to know that Paul's prayer is still being answered today. I realized that day that God no longer looked down upon me as a poor sinner struggling upon this earth, but in Christ and that I belong to Him as a child. . . .

May I say to you from my heart, get through to Christ. "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

[Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth \[Col. 3:2\]](#)

Actually the word for "affection" is mind. Think about the things that are above. In Philippians Paul said that whatever things are true and honest and just and lovely, think on these things -- the things of Christ. Life is full of its smaller problems (like whether or not you can get along with your mother-in-law), and they are very real to us, but by far the greatest need is for us to get through to Christ. That should come before everything else. "Set your affection on things above."

[For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God \[Col. 3:3\]](#)

"For ye are dead" might better be translated "for ye have died." If you have died, when did you die? Paul wrote to the Galatians, "I am crucified with Christ . . ." ([Gal. 2:20](#)). You died more than nineteen hundred years ago when Christ died. He took my place; He took your place. We died in Him.

"Your life is hid with Christ in God." I have been taken out of the old Adam by baptism; that is, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I have been taken out of Adam and placed in Christ. I am now in Christ. Now that I am in Christ, I should live out His life and let His fullness be lived out through me.

[When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory \[Col. 3:4\]](#)

If you have any life, it is Christ's life. John wrote in his first epistle that it was his intent to "shew unto you that eternal life." How could he show eternal life? He was going to show us Christ; Christ is eternal life. And one of these days those who belong to Him are going to "appear with him in glory."

## **Living Of Believers Is Holy (3:5-25)**

If we are truly risen with Christ this will be evident in two areas of our lives: (1) our personal holiness, and (2) our fellowship with others who are about us.

It seems that Christians are frightened of this matter of holiness. When I was a young preacher, I heard the late Bishop Moore of the old Southern Methodist church make this statement: "If Methodists were as afraid of sin as they are of holiness, it would be a wonderful thing." This isn't true of Methodists alone; it is true of most Christians. Somehow we don't like this term holiness. It is a very good word, and that is Paul's subject here -- personal holiness.

Christ was born as a little Babe in Bethlehem, but He is no longer in that inn. He is up yonder at God's right hand at this very moment. He's on a throne -- not in a cradle and not in an inn but in heaven itself. And He's there for you and me today. Now, if you are in Christ, if you have accepted Him as your Savior, then that is going to show in your life down here. Friend, if it doesn't tell in your life down here, then maybe you are not in Him up yonder!

**Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry [Col. 3:5]**

Mortify means "to put to death, or put in the place of death."

Fornication means "sexual immorality." Is that your sin today? Let's not kid ourselves -- there are a great many folk who are covering up this sin, and yet they still talk about being dedicated Christians! Paul brings this right out into the open and tells us that we are to put our physical members in the place of death. Do your eyes cause you trouble? Do you look with the eye of covetousness, or the eye of lust? Put those eyes in the place of death, and now use them as the eyes of Christ to look upon Him. My friend, that will change things, will it not?

Uncleanness includes thoughts, words, looks, gestures, and the jokes we tell.

Inordinate affection means "uncontrolled passion or lust." Every now and then someone will confess to me a sin in his life, and he will say, "Well, I couldn't help myself." My friend, you ought not to get in that spot in the first place. It's like the little boy whose mama called to him one night when she heard him in the kitchen, "Where are you?" He said, "I'm in the pantry." He had the cookie jar open. She called, "What are you doing?" He answered, "I'm fighting temptation!" My friend, that is the wrong place to fight temptation. Don't fight it there at the cookie jar, if you're not to have the cookies. The same thing applies to inordinate affection.

Evil concupiscence -- that means "evil desires." Put them to death, my friend.

"Covetousness, which is idolatry" means when we always must have more. Is the almighty dollar your god today? Are you more interested in the dollar than you are in the living Christ? These questions can begin to hurt! Our bodies are the tabernacle of the Holy Spirit, and they are to be used for God.

When I drove to my office this morning there were a great many people on their way to work. Many of them were professional men and business executives. One man went by

me in a Cadillac. He didn't see me or anyone else because he was in such a hurry. I don't know why he was hurrying, but I can guess. We see pictures of people in other lands going to heathen temples and worshiping there, and we feel sorry for them in the darkness of their idolatry. But I suspect that the fellow in the Cadillac was also in darkness, that he was on his way to worship his idol and to bow before it. His idol was the almighty dollar, and he was rushing to work to see how many he could make. A great many folk are overcome by this matter of covetousness. They covet the material things of this world -- they want more money.

I would venture to say that covetousness is the root of most of the problems in our country today. ". . . the love of money is the root of all evil . . ." ([1Tim. 6:10](#)). Money is not the problem -- it can even be used for the glory of God. But there are many men, even Christians, who are working on that second million, and they don't need it. It is because they worship an idol. If you are in Christ, He will come first and you will seek those things which are above.

**For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience [Col. 3:6]**

"For which things' sake" -- Paul means the things he has just been speaking of, the things which the world does.

"The wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." Men are not lost simply because they do these things, neither are they lost because they haven't heard of Christ. Men are lost because they are sinners, sinners in their hearts. And, because they are sinners, they do these things.

**In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them [Col. 3:7]**

Those of us who now know the Lord practiced these sins in our lives at one time. I hope that we are not still doing them.

I met a young millionaire in Florida quite a few years ago. He very frankly admitted that before he was saved he worshiped the almighty dollar. He was always after the next dollar then the next one. When he came to Christ, he decided to retire. He had already made a million dollars and any more that he made he wanted to put into the Lord's work. He wanted to spend his time seeking the things of Christ.

Oh, my friend, do we put Him first? Or are we engaged in the very things that the world is engaged in and for which God intends to judge them? Well, how then can we expect that we shall escape the judgment of God? If you are in Christ, seek those things which are above, and you will not find yourself involved in the things of the world.

**But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth [Col. 3:8]**

These are the habits that we are to put off as we would put off a garment. We call a garment a habit, do we not? Many folk have a riding habit or a golfing habit. I have an old pair of slacks that I play golf in -- that's my golfing habit. (I don't look very good, but that is what I wear.) Different people have different habits that they wear. Paul says that

we are to put off these old practices as we'd put off a dirty, filthy garment. You don't send it to the laundry -- you throw it away! You put it in the garbage can. You "put off all these."

The first is "anger." There is a place for anger that is justified. You remember that the Lord Jesus was angry at the Pharisees because of the hardness of their hearts. That is not a sinful anger. The problem is that we become angry over the wrong things.

Anger becomes "wrath" when we develop an unforgiving spirit.

Someone has said that "malice" is congealed anger. It is an anger that has been nursed along. It is an anger that tries to take revenge and get even. Paul says that a Christian is to put that off like an old, dirty, filthy garment. That kind of behavior does not represent Christ.

"Blasphemy" can be of two kinds. There is a blasphemy against God and a blasphemy against man. The first type of blasphemy is to defame the name of God. It is not just taking His name in vain, but it is to misrepresent Him, to hate Him. I received a letter from a lady that tells about the death of her little three-year-old child and how she hated God because of that. Somebody gave her our little booklet, *The Death of a Little Child*, and she was brought to the Lord. She realized that she had been only a church member before and had not really been born again. You see that hating God for something that has happened is really blasphemy.

Did you know that you can also blaspheme another Christian when you make a statement about him that is not true? I remember years ago a statement that was made by a man about a preacher who was Arminian in his theology. The man who made the statement was a Calvinist, and he said that the preacher was "of Satan." Well, my friend, when you say things like that, untrue things about a child of God, you are guilty of blasphemy.

"Filthy communication out of your mouth" means foul communication and includes both that which is abusive and that which is filthy. I can't believe that Christians would want to indulge in that, but I am told that there are certain little groups which meet together and share dirty jokes. Some Christians use swear words. In fact, I have heard of Christian leaders doing that. I do not believe that you can be a child of God, friend, and live like that. These are things that are to be put off.

**Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man  
with his deeds [Col. 3:9]**

To whom is Paul speaking? He is writing this to believers, because he says, "seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." Is it possible for a Christian to lie? It certainly is. That doesn't mean that you have lost your salvation when you do -- otherwise many of us would have lost ours a long time ago. It does reveal that you don't reach a place of perfection, my friend, nor do you get rid of the old nature, when you become a child of God.

I believe one of the first sins a little child commits is to lie. I heard the story about the little boy who came running into the house and said, "Mama, Mama, a lion just ran across our front lawn." The mother said, "Willie, you know that was not a lion. That was a big

dog that ran across the lawn. You go upstairs and confess to the Lord that you lied about that." Little Willie went upstairs and after a while he came down again. His mother asked, "Did you confess your lie to the Lord?" He answered, "Yes, I did. But the Lord said when He first saw him, He thought he was a lion, too!" Lying is something that is deep-rooted in the human heart, and many Christians still indulge in it.

**And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him [Col. 3:10]**

"Put on the new man." If you take off the old garment, the old man, you put on the new garment, the new man. Nature abhors a vacuum. Putting off is not enough, we must live in the new man by the power of the Holy Spirit.

You and I have an old nature which has controlled us for so long that we have set up certain habits. That is why garment is such an effective term here -- it's a habit. We have developed certain patterns in the way we say and do things. We also have within us a complex nervous system that is conditioned to respond in a set fashion. If I put my hand down on a red hot stove, a message travels through the nervous system to the brain. The message gets switched over to a motor nerve which goes back down to the hand and says, "Say, you crazy fool, take your hand off that red hot stove. You're getting burned!" And you jerk your hand off the stove. Of course, it all happens more quickly than I can tell it. It is a reflex reaction that occurs very quickly. In the same way, our habit patterns are formed.

It is psychologically true that we are able to put off old habits and form new ones. But it is especially true for the believer because he has the power of the Holy Spirit within him. We are to "put on the new man."

"Renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." You are to put on the new man, and that new Man is Christ. In that way the church is able to represent Him on this earth.

**Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all [Col. 3:11]**

"Neither Greek nor Jew" -- in the church, the body of believers, there is neither Greek nor Jew. This was a religious division or distinction that was made in Paul's day.

"Circumcision nor uncircumcision." This was also a religious division.

"Barbarian, Scythian." Barbarians were those who were not Greeks, those whom we would call heathen today. The Scythian was the worst kind of barbarian. Scythia was north of the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. The people who lived there were probably the most barbaric the world has known. You talk about pagan, heathen, brutal, and mean! They would take their enemies and scalp them; then they would use the skull as a cup and drink the blood of their victims out of the skull! I cannot think of anything more heathen than that! Did you know that the ancestors of many of us who have white skin came from that territory? We are called Caucasians after the area where these barbarians lived.

Even in Paul's day, some of these people were being led to Christ. The gospel had reached out and done a tremendous work, and some of them were in the church at Colosse. Missionaries had gone north beyond the Black and Caspian Seas -- Scythians had been won for Jesus Christ. Even though they were barbarians, they were brought into that one body which is the church.

"But Christ is all, and in all." You just can't have it any more wonderful than that, my friend. This is something that is beyond description. Christ is the catalyst who brings together individuals and groups who are separate and makes them one in Him. A catalyst is a substance that is placed with elements that are opposed to each other and brings them together into a new compound. This is exactly what Christ does. We have all been made one in Him!

Remember that we are in the practical section of Colossians. In the doctrinal section we saw Christ, who is the fullness of God and the head of the church. Believers have been made full, made complete in Him. We will find all that we need in Christ, not in any man-made legal or philosophical system.

Since we have risen with Christ, we are to seek those things that are above where Christ is at the right hand of God. We have seen that this will lead to personal holiness. Beginning now with verse 12 we will find that it will also lead to holiness in our relationship to others; then verses 18-21 will deal with holiness in the home; and in verses 22-25 with holiness on the job. The Christian life is living out the fulness of Christ in our walk in the home, on the job, and in our social relationships.

Paul has clearly labeled the things of the old man that are to be put off. Now he will label the specifics that are to make up the wardrobe of the new man. We are going to see the latest in fashions for Christians, by the way. In fact, I have written a message on this passage of Scripture, and I have called it, "What the Well-Dressed Christian Will Wear This Year."

**Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering**  
**[Col. 3:12]**

"The elect of God." There is a great deal of discussion about this matter of election. The fact of the matter is that if you have trusted Christ, you have on this new garment, and you are one of the elect. If these things that Paul is going to list are in your life, you're of the elect. I couldn't begin to tell you otherwise, nor argue any further about that -- you're of the elect. The elect of God are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

You will notice that the garments Paul is mentioning here are actually the fruit of the Holy Spirit. You and I cannot produce them in our lives. The minute you and I think about the wonderful position that we have in Christ and the high calling we have in Him, we have to recognize as we look at ourselves that we are impotent. We are weak and powerless, unable to "put on" these fruits. We are in the same position as the bride in the Song of Solomon. She had been kissed with the kiss of peace. Peace has been made with God. He has kissed us, my friend, and told us that our sins are forgiven us in Christ. How wonderful that is! But as the children of God we still sin. Then we need to remember the

boy who got away from his father and his home, who lived in sin and wasted his fortune in riotous living. When he came back home, his father saw him afar off and ran and fell on his neck. What did he do? He kissed his son. That is the kiss of pardon, the kiss of forgiveness which God gives to His children.

We are in the position of the bride who says in the Song of Solomon, "Draw me, draw me" (see [Song. 1:4](#)). I am not able to attain to this wonderful position that I have in Christ. I can't do it myself. So you and I find ourselves cast upon Him. This is where the Spirit of God moves in and enables us to walk in the Spirit.

Bowels of mercies means "heart of compassion." How heartless this world is today. How indifferent and mechanical it has become! I find that much of the time I am simply a number. In the few business transactions that I have, a computer -- a machine -- does business with me. I can't tell that machine how I feel. I can't tell that machine when it has made a mistake. I can't tell that machine when I have made a mistake. I just do business with that machine. It sends me a bill and I pay it -- that's all. I also do business with a bank. It has as much heart as the computer. In fact, the computer is the heart of the bank. Since I have had cancer I must also do business with my doctor. I have a very wonderful doctor who takes care of me, but when I had to be taken to the emergency room and I had a strange doctor, I found that he considered me just a boy with a stomachache. I wasn't a person to him at all. He just talked in big medical terms -- that's all I was to him.

Paul is saying that as believers we should have a heart of compassion in our relationships with those around us.

Kindness is a word that Paul uses that carries with it the thought of being "profitable." It means to be helpful to others. There is another Greek word for kindness that has an element of sternness in it. You can be kind and still be stern, as when I tell my grandson, "Don't you do that." When I say that, I mean to be stern with him. But there is the kindness that means gentleness, and that is the word that Paul uses here.

Humbleness is "meekness." As I say so often, meekness does not mean weakness. Notice that here Paul's emphasis is "humbleness of mind."

Meekness. Here the emphasis is meekness of spirit.

Longsuffering is the Greek word makrothumia, which means "long-burning" -- it burns a long time. We shouldn't have a short fuse with our friends and Christian brethren. We shouldn't make snap judgments.

[Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye \[Col. 3:13\]](#)

Quarrel actually is "complaint." Paul is including situations where there is blame involved and the complaint is justified.

What are we to do in such circumstances? "Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." This does not mean that you become a doormat. But it does mean that when we have a complaint, we're to go to the individual and try to work out the matter.

There are always going to be some people with whom you cannot work out things -- we must realize that. When our Lord denounced the Pharisees, there was no mention of forgiveness -- He just denounced them. They did not seek His forgiveness, of course.

Paul's thought here is that Christ has forgiven us so much that it won't hurt us to forgive somebody who has stepped on our toes. We are to forgive others in the same way that Christ has forgiven us.

And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful [[Col. 3:14-15](#)]

Charity is "love." Put on love. We have here in these verses two fruits of the Spirit: love and peace.

Rule means "to umpire." The peace of God should govern our hearts.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord [[Col. 3:16](#)]

There are many people who are great on doctrine and want to be fundamental in the faith. That is all-important, and I don't think anyone emphasizes it any more than I do. These people can often be heard praising Bible study, yet they do not attend Bible study, and they know so little about the Word of God.

"The word of Christ." The Lord Jesus said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" ([John 15:3](#)). The best Saturday night bath that you can take is to study the Word of God.

Dwell means "to be at home, to be given the run of the house." We should be familiar with the Word of God. The Bible should not be a strange book to you as it is to so many people today.

"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts" -- let it be an umpire. And then "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" -- let it be at home. Know Him. Be familiar with the Word of Christ; study it and know what He's saying to you. That is where He is going to speak to you today, my friend -- in His Word.

"Teaching and admonishing one another" -- in what? "In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

"Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." I can't sing -- so my singing never does get beyond that which is in the heart. The point is that we are to let the Word of God have this marvelous influence in our lives that Paul has described here.

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him [[Col. 3:17](#)]

Do you want a norm for Christian conduct? Do you want a standard to go by? Do you want a principle rather than a lot of little rules? Paul gives us such a principle here. He

does not say what we should or should not do. He simply says, "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." My friend, whatever you do -- at your place of employment, in your home, and in all relationships with others -- can you say, "I'm doing this in the name of the Lord Jesus"? If you can say that, if you are doing it in His name, then go ahead and do it. This is a marvelous standard, a yardstick that we can put down on our lives.

Now Paul comes to the subject of holiness in the home. You will notice that he is dealing with the same things that he dealt with in the Epistle to the Ephesians. There he told them to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and then he gave them these same instructions. Here in Colossians he writes, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom," and then he goes on to give instructions for living.

What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? It means that you will have to be filled with the Word of Christ also. The Word of God is inspired by the Spirit of God. If the Word of God dwells in you richly, then you are filled with the Spirit of God. I do not believe that you can be filled with the Holy Spirit or that you can serve Christ until you are filled with the knowledge of His Word. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

Now, if the Word of Christ dwells in your richly, it will work itself out in your life, and it will have an effect on your home.

***Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord [Col. 3:18]***

This is for the purpose of order in the home. This is not for the purpose of producing a browbeating husband. I do not believe that God intends for a wife to submit to an unsaved husband who beats her or orders her to do things contrary to her walk with the Lord.

A woman wrote to me and said that her husband was an unsaved man. When he would get drunk, he would beat her. She felt as a Christian she ought to stay with him. I advised her to leave him. I do not believe that God ever asks any woman to stay with a drunken husband. She loses her own personality; she loses her own dignity, and she will find herself being brought down to his level if she submits to that. She is to submit "as it is fit in the Lord."

***Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them [Col. 3:19]***

The husband who loves his wife is the one to whom the wife is to submit. She is not to be the one to take the lead in the family, but she is to urge him to take the lead. I think we have had this thing all wrong for a long time. In my entire ministry I have removed the word obey from the marriage ceremony. I don't think it belongs in there at all.

***Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord [Col. 3:20]***

Children are to obey their parents. They are to honor their parents all their lives, but when they are children they are to obey them.

However, the child also needs to grow up. I don't think this verse means that a twenty-four-year-old boy must stay tied to his mama's apron strings. Whether he is married or single, when he has reached maturity, he is ready to get away from his parents. We see so many teenagers rebelling against their parents in our day. I believe that God may have put into the hearts of teenagers the necessity to get away. There is a period in their lives that is a weaning time, and they need to learn to be independent. I have seen some literature that tells young married couples that they are still to go to their parents and obey them. I think that is nonsense and entirely unscriptural (see [Gen. 2:24](#)). "Children, obey your parents in all things" is a verse for children, for minors.

**Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged [Col. 3:21]**

Let me refer you to my book on Ephesians and my comment on [Ephesians 6:4](#). The remarkable feature of this verse, as given both in Ephesians and Colossians, is that under the Mosaic Law, the commandment referred only to the children. There was no reference to parents. Had the Law developed in the parents a dictatorship rather than a directorship? No. The Book of Proverbs reveals that the responsibility to find God's will for the child had been given to the parents: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" ([Prov. 22:6](#)).

Now the apostle moves on to the subject of holiness on the job, at the place of employment. He will discuss the relationships that exist on the job, the relationship of capital to labor.

**Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God [Col. 3:22]**

Eye-service is a word peculiar in the New Testament to the writings of Paul. He means, "Don't keep your eye on the clock. Keep your eye on Christ. He is the One whom you are serving." That is the way you ought to do your job.

Sometimes Christians talk about being dedicated to the Lord and wanting to serve the Lord, but they are lazy. We had one boy working here at our radio headquarters who was like that. He stood around with his hands in his pockets all the while his mouth was going, but he thought he was dedicated! May I say something very frankly? If you are lazy on the job, you are not dedicated to Jesus Christ.

Paul had reduced the Christian life to its lowest common denominator. He had one simple goal: ". . . forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" ([Phil. 3:13-14](#)). He had his eye, his mind, his heart, and his total affections fixed upon Jesus Christ.

"In singleness of heart, fearing God." The idea here is not to fear the boss, but to fear God.

**And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men [Col. 3:23]**

When Paul says to work "heartily," he means work from your soul. We have heard a lot about a "soul brother," but we ought to have a little more "soul work." If you can't do something with enthusiasm unto the Lord, regardless of what it is, it is wrong for you. Some people write in and ask me, "Is it right for me to do this?" or "Is it right for me to go to this place?" Here is your standard: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord." That applies to everything. Even if you cannot go to a church with enthusiasm, I would recommend you quit going to that church.

"As to the Lord, and not unto men." Whatever we do should be done to the Lord, not to men. We are not to be men pleasers.

**Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ [Col. 3:24]**

Maybe you're not going to have to report to your boss; or when his back is turned he doesn't see that you are loafing on the job, not really giving him a full day's work. But the Lord Jesus sees, and you are going to answer to Him. You are in Him, and you belong to Him. Therefore, you have to give an account of your life to Him.

Since we represent the Lord Jesus down here upon this earth, He is going to ask that His representatives be found faithful. There are a great many folk who are humble, little-known people that you and I know nothing about who have been faithful on the job. They have been faithful to their employer, faithful to their church, faithful to their homes, faithful to their pastor. Very few people know about them. The Lord knows. They will receive a reward. I think you and I are going to be surprised by the reward some people will get.

"For ye serve the Lord Christ." This puts a different complexion upon Christian service down here. There are many people who are lazy in God's work. I would say that laziness is one of the curses of the ministry. It is found in the church staff. It is so easy to loaf on the job because nobody is looking, nobody is watching. We need to remember that we serve the Lord Jesus, and we are going to give an account to Him.

**But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons [Col. 3:25]**

He is going to straighten out everything in your life and in my life that we don't straighten out down here. This is exactly what this means.

It is a privilege to be in God's service. It is a privilege to teach a Sunday school class. But don't ever think that this makes you something special. When the Lord judges you, He will judge you on faithfulness. All will be judged alike. God is no respecter of persons.

My friend, we are joined to a living Christ. How wonderful it is! I cannot attain to it in my own strength. But He says He is going to help me. Only the Holy Spirit working in me can attain this high and holy calling. He wants me to mirror Him in every relationship I have down here. What a glorious calling you and I have! Doesn't that give you enthusiasm today? Don't look to the Babe in Bethlehem. Go to the living Christ who is at God's right hand.

## Chapter 4

**THEME:** Fellowship of believers is hearty

We are in the section of this epistle which is dealing with holiness on the job, at the place of employment. Chapter 3 concluded with exhortations to servants or to employees. Chapter 4 will continue with exhortations to masters or to employers.

**Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal;  
knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven [Col. 4:1]**

"Masters" -- Paul has something to say not only to the servant but also to the masters, to the bosses.

"Equal" means not to level down but to level up. The master is to do right by his servant.

"Knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." The master will stand before Christ someday. Every Christian employer, as well as employee, will stand before God. This does put the gospel in shoe leather, does it not? It gets right down where the rubber meets the road. Or, in this case, it gets right down where your foot is walking in the factory or in the office. Whatever you're doing, you are to do it unto the Lord, because you are going to answer to Him if you are His child.

Now the next few verses present three more areas of Christian conduct which are important. They are prayer, our public walk, and speech.

**Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving [Col. 4:2]**

These two words go together: Pray and watch. They are very important. They remind us of the experience of Nehemiah. When the enemy tried to stop him from rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, he didn't just throw in the towel and cry out that he couldn't do the job. Nor did he simply say, "Well, we'll make it a matter of prayer," and then go on as he had been. No, this is what Nehemiah said: "Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them" ([Neh. 4:9](#)). This is what Paul tells us here: Watch and pray.

An old pastor in Georgia used to make this statement: "When a farmer prays for a corn crop, God expects him to say 'Amen' with a hoe." If you are praying about a certain matter, get busy with it.

I'm afraid we hear a lot of pious nonsense about prayer. I received a letter from a preacher who has cancer. He said, "I've been to Mayo Clinic. They found that I have cancer, and they recommend an operation. But I have come home and decided that I would do like you did: I will just trust the Lord." I sat down and wrote him a letter in a hurry. I said, "Brother, I did trust the Lord but that wasn't all that I did. I went to whom I think is the finest cancer specialist out here on the West Coast. My case was brought up before the UCLA Medical Clinic and was discussed there. They recommended the best thing that medical science knew to do. I have had two operations for cancer. My Christian brother, if you want to be an intelligent Christian (and I think you are), then you go back to Mayo Clinic as quickly as you can and tell them to operate if that is what they think is best."

Then you trust the Lord, and He will bring you through it. That is what I did." Watch and pray. Be on the job. This is so practical.

"With thanksgiving." Be sure and thank God always because He is going to hear and answer your prayer. Maybe it won't be the answer you wanted, but He will answer. This is like breathing: inhale by prayer, exhale by thanksgiving.

**Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:**

**That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak [Col. 4:3-4]**

"Withal praying also for us" -- Paul says, "Don't forget to pray for us." My friend, you can't help Paul any longer by praying for him, but you can help your pastor and other Christian ministries.

"That God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds." Paul was in prison when he wrote this. He wanted to be released and go out through an open door that he might preach the gospel.

I consider every aspect of my ministry to be a door, and I ask God to keep the doors open. He has promised that He would. This is the verse that I have chosen for my ministry: ". . . behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" ([Rev. 3:8](#)). He has set a lot of open doors before me, and I ask Him to open even more doors.

**Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time [Col. 4:5]**

"Walk in wisdom." The child of God has a responsibility before the world today. Don't be foolish as a child of God.

We hear so much pious nonsense in our day. There are those who said the Lord would return by 1980. I don't know where they got such information. There were probably a lot of embarrassed folk with red faces in 1980. Christians have no right to make such statements before an unsaved world. Nor should we say we are trusting the Lord when our actions show that we really are not trusting Him. We should not do foolish things before the world.

A woman in Southern California wrote me a letter and rebuked me for going to the doctor for treatment of my cancer. She said that that was not trusting the Lord. She wrote, "I have cancer and I am trusting the Lord. I don't go to the doctor." They buried her not long ago; she died of her cancer. I'm afraid at times we are guilty of causing our neighbors to smile and say, "This Christianity is a foolish sort of thing." We need to learn to "walk in wisdom toward them that are without."

"Redeeming the time." Buy up your opportunities. When you see an opportunity, pray that the Lord will lead you. Don't force yourself on people. Just pray and ask the Lord to open the door, and He will open it. I wish I had space to tell you how many times this has happened in my life and in the lives of others. Let Him open the door -- before you

make the mistake of putting your foot in your mouth. I knocked on many doors when I was a pastor, and I often stepped in and put my foot in my mouth the very first thing. Since then I have learned to do a lot more praying before I walk in.

**Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man [Col. 4:6]**

Some people think this verse says, "Let your speech be salt," and they really sting you with their little sarcastic remarks! But what it says is, "always with grace, seasoned with salt." A child of God should have a conversation that deters evil. It should withhold evil rather than promote it. I think it also means that a Christian should not be boring. We should be enthusiastic -- "That ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

### **Fellowship Of Believers Is Hearty (4:7-18)**

We come now to a remarkable list of names of people whom Paul knew. They are men and women who lived back there in the first century. They walked down the Roman roads, lived in Roman cities, and were under Roman rule. They were in the midst of paganism, but they were God's children.

Many of these people lived in Ephesus. When I was in Ephesus, I climbed up in the theater there and from that height I could look down that great marble boulevard -- I would call it Harbor Boulevard, because it leads right down to where the harbor was in that day. I thought, This is where one could have seen Paul come walking up the boulevard. There would be Tychicus coming up the way; and there's Onesimus and Aristarchus and Epaphras -- all those fellows. They were all Christians. They were God's men back yonder in the first century.

The interesting thing is that Paul had never been to Rome nor had he been to Colosse, yet he gives a list of people that he knew, and many of them are from those two cities. This reveals that Paul had led many people to Christ who returned home to cities that he never was able to reach directly or personally. His ministry was a tremendous, far-reaching ministry.

**All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord:**

**Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts [Col. 4:7-8]**

"Tychicus" was the pastor of the church in Ephesus. He is mentioned in [Ephesians 6:21](#), [Acts 20:4](#), and [2Timothy 4:12](#). He was a wonderful brother in the Lord.

**With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here [Col. 4:9]**

"Onesimus" was a slave of Philemon in Colosse. He had run away from his master, had been led to the Lord through the ministry of Paul, and was now being sent back to his master by him. Paul wrote a letter to Philemon when he sent Onesimus back, and he tells Philemon that Onesimus is his "beloved brother." You can see from this that there is a new relationship in Christ. Master and slave are now brothers in Christ Jesus.

Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) [\[Col. 4:10\]](#)

"Aristarchus" was a fellow prisoner with Paul, and he was his friend.

"Marcus" is John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas -- the son of his sister. He is the writer of the Gospel of Mark. You will remember that Mark left Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, and because of this Paul didn't want to take him along on the second missionary journey. Paul was wrong in his judgment of John Mark. The boy made good, and Paul acknowledges that here. Paul gives the Colossians instructions, "Don't reject him like I did. You folks receive him." Paul mentions John Mark again in his second letter to Timothy: ". . . Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry" [\(2Tim. 4:11\)](#).

And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision.  
These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which  
have been a comfort unto me [\[Col. 4:11\]](#)

"Jesus, which is called Justus" would be the name Joshua in the Hebrew language. Being "of the circumcision" indicates he was Jewish. This shows us that there were a few Israelites in the church in Colosse. However, there were not many; the Colossian church was mostly Gentile. These men were wonderful brethren, helpers of Paul, and great missionaries themselves.

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you,  
always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand  
perfect and complete in all the will of God [\[Col. 4:12\]](#)

"Epaphras" was the pastor in Colosse. Now he is in prison, so he has a new ministry, the ministry of prayer. I received a letter from a young preacher who is paralyzed and cannot preach any more. He wrote a most discouraged letter. I answered him like this: "I have a job for you: Pray for me." Prayer is a ministry, too. If God takes you out of active service, pray for God's servants. It simply means God has given you a new ministry; He has something different for you to do.

For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them  
that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis [\[Col. 4:13\]](#)

These three cities were very close together. Hierapolis and Laodicea were about six to ten miles apart; they were both near Colosse. There were churches in all three places.

Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you [\[Col. 4:14\]](#)

"Luke, the beloved physician." Isn't that a wonderful designation for him?

When Paul first mentioned Demas, he called him a fellow worker. Here he simply says, "and Demas"; I think this may indicate that Paul isn't really sure about him at this time. Later on Demas will forsake Paul. How tragic that is.

Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nympha, and the  
church which is in his house [\[Col. 4:15\]](#)

These cities had great heathen temples, but the Christians met in homes. I used to hold the viewpoint and I still do -- although I don't emphasize it today as I did at one time -- that as the church started in the home, it is going to come back to the home.

**And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea [Col. 4:16]**

"The epistle from Laodicea." Paul does not say that he had written an epistle to the Laodiceans. Apparently the letters of Paul were circulated around, and the Laodiceans had read one of them. A great many of the scholars believe that this might be a reference to the Epistle to the Ephesians. Paul is telling the Colossians to read that epistle also and to share theirs with the Laodiceans.

**And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it [Col. 4:17]**

"Archippus" is another man on Paul's list in this letter. We do not know anything more about him than is mentioned here. He is a man who had a gift, and Paul is urging him to use that gift.

**The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds.  
Grace be with you. Amen [Col. 4:18]**

Paul dictated most of his letters. (The letter to the Galatians was written in his own hand.) Here he gives his signature to the letter which he has dictated.

This is the second time that Paul says, "Remember my bonds" -- or, "Pray for me."

"Grace be with you. Amen." Isn't this a wonderful letter that we have read? Paul wrote to a church that he had never visited, but he knew many of the people and had led them to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Bibliography

(Recommended for Further Study)

Gromacki, Robert G. Stand Perfect in Wisdom: An Exposition of Colossians and Philemon. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1981.

Harrison, Everett F. Colossians: Christ-All-Sufficient. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1971.

Hendriksen, William. Exposition of Colossians and Philemon. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1965.

Ironside, H. A. Lectures on the Epistle to the Colossians. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1929.

Kelly, William. Lectures on the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians. Oak Park, Illinois: Bible Truth Publishers, n.d.

Kent, Homer A., Jr. *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Colossians and Philemon*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978. (Excellent.)

King, Guy H. *Crossing the Border*. Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: Christian Literature Crusade, 1957. (Devotional.)

Moule, Handley C. G. *Colossians and Philemon*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1893. (This is a reprint from The Cambridge University Bible for Schools and Colleges. This helpful series also covers Romans, Ephesians, and Philippians.)

Nicholson, William. *Oneness with Christ*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1903. (Devotional.)

Robertson, A. T. *Paul and the Intellectuals*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1928.

Thomas, W. H. Griffith. *Studies in Colossians and Philemon*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1973. (Excellent.)

Vaughan, Curtis. *Colossians and Philemon: A Study Guide*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980.

Vine, W. E. *Philippians and Colossians*. London: Oliphants, 1955. (This is an excellent treatment.)

Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Complete*. Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1981.

Wuest, Kenneth S. *Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953.